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THE
BEATITUDES

MGR. HENRY BOLO



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THE BEATITUDES

*The Poor in Spirit, the Meek and
Humble*

BY

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"THE MORROW OF LIFE," ETC.

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PREFACE

WE are told in Holy Scripture that before Jesus promulgated His eight Beatitudes, He passed the whole night in prayer. Why did He act thus, if not to obtain for us, who are too attached to earthly things, the grace to taste the sweetness of these celestial doctrines ?

May all who read this book feel the blessed effects of our merciful Saviour's prayer.

PARIS, 16th April 1899

Feast of the Good Shepherd



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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

IN common with every other subject of human knowledge, happiness may be considered scientifically—that is to say, we may investigate its essential characteristics, determine its conditions, and formulate its laws.

I attempted to do this in my previous work—"The Philosophy of a Happy Man"—but this scientific aspect of the question is not the one that concerns us most closely. We are interested by discussions as to the origin and nature of happiness, only in so far as they furnish us with practical methods which will enable us ourselves to attain to happiness. Unless they lead to a practical result, the discussions satisfy us no more than a cookery book would satisfy a hungry man. We may need clear and accurate philosophical prin-

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ciples in our quest of happiness, but rules showing us how to attain it are of far greater importance. We require precise and definite statements, not obscured by multiplicity of words, but capable of guiding us along those paths which philosophy has pointed out as leading to happiness. In addition to the philosophers, who instruct us in the abstract science of happiness, we need an infallible master to lay down for us a definite course of action, and teach us the art of being happy.

But it is no easy matter to find such a teacher, and we venture to assert, without fear of contradiction, that none could exist apart from Christianity. Whoever professes to be able to give practical lessons in happiness ought to base his instructions on the evidence of his own felicity, for, if his method is good, he ought to be the first to profit by it. This is the best test of its merits, worth more than recommendations and diplomas. Whoever is master of any art cannot only teach it, but realises himself all the perfection of which it is capable ; and an unhappy being, convinced of his own

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misery, who imparts his melancholy to his friends or to the general public, is no more fit to teach others how to be happy than a deaf and dumb man is capable of giving singing lessons. Even if he seeks to propagate his theories amongst his equals, his authority is regarded as questionable ; he is supposed to be either incapable or deceitful, to be deficient either in wisdom or in sincerity ; something is wanting either in his doctrine or in his good faith. I find it as difficult to believe in the happiness of the rich and luxurious Roman emperors who committed suicide, as in the pessimism of Schopenhauer, who was wealthy, led a gay life, and played a tune on his flute in the intervals of writing his imprecations against life. In both cases I suspect the existence of some mistake or deception.

If we study the non-Christian philosophers we scarcely find any of those professing to teach the art of being happy who did not at the end acknowledge themselves to have been mistaken, or whose false arguments did not prove them to be impostors, whilst some frankly confessed that they were un-

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happy. Those who advanced farthest in the direction of true happiness, such as the Antonines, were marvellous instances of resignation, but nothing more. An undercurrent of sadness is undeniably present in them all, and especially in such as systematically sought happiness in pleasure. Their philosophy resembles a boat decked with flowers floating on a pond of dirty water, which constantly splashes over it. Horace's Odes are suggestive of a concert where the tinkling of bells, the ringing of glasses, and the joyous music of the flute are accompanied by a deep bass, muttering almost incessantly a reminder of the sadness of our fleeting life, of painful returns to realities, of the haunting fear of death, and of our nearness to that abyss which will finally swallow up our most cherished possessions and our beloved friends. We may well agree with the voluptuary in Ecclesiastes in pronouncing all to be "Vanity of vanities." "Laughter shall be mingled with sorrow, and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy" (Prov. xiv. 13).

Epicurus, the boldest advocate of pleasure, placed this inscription over the entrance to

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his garden : “ Traveller, thou wilt do well to tarry here, for here the highest happiness consists in pleasure.” When, however, a disciple presented himself, Epicurus gave him a dish of coarse meal, and fresh water in abundance, and then said to him : “ Are you not satisfied ? ”

In the pagan world, of all those who professed to teach the art of happiness, only some few Stoics succeeded in making an impression upon men of lofty and truly philosophic natures. There is certainly something imposing in their sober doctrines and in their attitude—noble at least in words—towards society and life. But a thorough investigation of their teaching, or of their private life dissipates our illusions regarding them. The great bulk of mankind will never be induced seriously to accept the popular enunciation of their philosophy—that suffering exists only in name ; and, even if some ambitious spirits are carried away by the somewhat high-flown doctrines of this heroic school, a short examination of those who professed them will soon reveal their weakness.

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Is not Seneca one of the most attractive adherents of the Stoic school ?

Undoubtedly ; and yet it is difficult to maintain our original high opinion of him when we see in what a wordy, hesitating, and awkward way he defends himself against those who charged him—as all human moralists have been charged—with inconsistency of life and doctrine.

In his treatise *De Vita Beata* he develops elaborately his theories regarding happiness. This method is admirable, logical, exalted, pure ; in fact, almost superhuman. But suddenly, in the midst of his task, the author breaks down ; the philosopher's robe, which he is wearing with so much dignity, has holes in it, and he perceives that his noblest gestures have brought the holes into sight. He sees those who know his private history and his manner of life, laughing at his theories or enraged at his pretensions. He hears them exclaim, as they throw down his wonderful book : “ He goes too far ; his impudence is unbounded ! ” and so he loses courage. He shuffles, and, abandoning his argument, proceeds in a

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dull way to defend himself against those who reproach him with his inconsistent conduct. Before giving any explanations, however, he is reduced to putting into the mouths of those, who know him too well to be duped by his fine theories, such questions as these : " Why do you not practise what you preach ? Why do you adopt so servile a tone before your superior ? Why do you attach so much importance to money ? Why are you so sensitive to gossip ? Why have you a luxurious country house ? Why do you not dine in accordance with your precepts ? Why do you have such magnificent furniture ? Why is wine older than yourself drunk at your table ? Why does your wife wear ear-rings of a value equal to the income of a wealthy family ? Why do your young slaves wear tunics of costly material gathered in folds round them ? Why is serving a dinner regarded as a fine art in your establishment ? Why do you employ a professional carver ? "

From this point onwards the book is no longer a treatise *de Vita Beata*, composed by a philosopher, but a pitiable defence of his

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own mode of life. In order to explain with more or less truth how he has profited, by four years of imperial favour, to amass a fortune of three million sesterces, according to Suilius, or of seventeen and a half million drachmas, according to Dio Cassius and Tacitus, Seneca writes at as great a length as he wrote to prove that happiness is the result of virtue, and that pleasure is "a low, servile, weak, perishable, and shameful thing."

We have seen how Epicurus taught that happiness consisted in pleasure, and yet he practised asceticism in his own life.

Seneca, on the other hand, found fault with Epicurus, extolled austerities, disinterestedness, and virtue as being the sole means of acquiring happiness. Notwithstanding he made a fortune by ascertaining the contents of wills, by defrauding childless old men, and by crushing others with extortionate usury.

It may be that some of the ancient philosophers, who professed to teach happiness, led lives less inconsistent with their doctrines, but it is certainly true that there is some

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weak spot in them all, which causes us to distrust them, and compromises their authority.

In Marcus Aurelius we have the typical Stoic who had the courage to apply his doctrines honestly to his own life. From childhood he submitted himself to a most severe discipline, even sleeping on the bare earth, until his mother's urgent entreaties forced him to use an ox-hide as his couch. He was the most gentle and kindly of men in theory, but in practice, and especially in his dealings with the Christians, he was not altogether unlike that cruel monster Nero! It is also well known that Socrates, by his shameful vices, gave the lie to his sublime utterances.

Plato and Diogenes each had a very different conception of the art of living well, but in a celebrated dialogue we find them charging one another with that pride which is akin to hypocrisy. Probably the Seven Sages would not have continued to call forth the admiration of mankind, if we possessed more detailed knowledge of their lives. In their case we may, perhaps, adapt

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a well-known saying, and affirm that no man appears happy to his valet.

The moment that a man, being merely a man, professes his ability to teach an art so hard to practise, so vainly sought by all, so obscured by mists and illusions, so apt to be the subject of trickery or hypocrisy, as the art of being happy, we ask how he will induce men to believe in him, and thus furnish him with a starting-point.

A sound and true philosophical system ought to be able fearlessly to withstand arguments and to undergo the criticism of men likely to adopt it, and above all, it ought to submit unscathed to the control of reason. But no eudæmonistic system of human origin has hitherto satisfied these requirements, and, therefore, it is no wonder that the generality of men have refused to accept any at all, even theoretically, and until the Gospel teaching became known, they were guided simply by that kind of rough-and-ready animal instinct which refuses to buy a pig in a poke, or to put faith in foxes that have lost their tails.

These considerations suffice to show us

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what kind of teacher we need, and what vast authority he must have if, on the strength of his words, we are to accept principles which it is very hard to put into practice and which no system of philosophy has ever succeeded in making popular.

Moreover, if it is true that happiness is not to be found in materialism nor in the gratification of sensual appetites, it will require no less authority to make men accept this happiness than it does to lay upon them the obligation of practising virtue.

Both are, in fact, beyond the scope of our primary mental conception, and are repugnant to our nature.

A dogma which overpowers human reason must not depend for its acceptance upon human reason alone; at the same time, a conception of the happiness that is based on the sacrifice of tangible advantages is certain to rouse the antagonism of the senses and to be at first sight unattractive to all men. In vain did the Stoics propose an ideal happiness that sometimes resembles the Christian standard; being purely philosophers, they won no more adherents to

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their theory than Plato or Pythagoras would have done had they taught the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity.

Hence we must conclude that, if the true theory of real happiness is based upon the renunciation of worldly goods and the mortification of the senses, some very high and powerful authority will be required before it can gain acceptance. When it has once been accepted, it may be followed by persuasion, philosophical arguments, explanations, and apologetic justifications, but all these would never convince anyone who had not previously accepted the theory. The science of happiness resembles that of dogma. Theologians toil to expound the truths of a revelation that would never be accepted were the theologians its authors.

Only once had the trumpets power to overthrow the walls of Jericho.

Let us go a step further.

A theory of happiness so hostile to the senses will never be accepted and put into practice unless it is confirmed by God. Consider it thus : On the word of a master I am about to sacrifice all my possessions,

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my honour—in a sense, my peace, my affections, and my life. I am going to do this act of apparent folly, to throw away that to which every instinct urges me to cling, simply to satisfy my craving for happiness—a craving that is the sum-total of all my natural instincts. In the depths of my being, an imperious voice makes itself heard, asserting that pleasure is the only good ; and all the voices of exterior nature re-echo the assertion, forming so mighty and so irresistible a cry, that only a supernatural Voice could overpower and conquer it. Nothing less than divine authority is needed to obtain credence for a mystery that may almost be called speculative and platonic, and such authority is still more necessary in the case of a doctrine opposed to our blind and violent desires.

If, then, happiness is in its very nature antagonistic to our sensual appetites, and if God alone can make us accept the law of happiness, His wisdom and goodness must needs constrain Him to give us clear and authoritative directions for attaining to it. Because He has given us intelligence and

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has created us for Himself, He has felt bound, as it were, to reveal to our faith many natural and supernatural truths which it would have been very difficult, or even impossible, for us to discover. Having filled us with a hunger for happiness, and having destined us for something higher than merely animal existence, God owed it to Himself, even more than to us, to teach us the way to true felicity and to reveal clearly to the simple and lowly what the wisest and best of mankind have only partially perceived. Is it possible that the God of free and intelligent beings should leave them without guidance, liable to be led astray by their very liberty ? Could the Father and Creator of eager, loving hearts abandon them to deceitful fancies, to the fatal imaginations of their undisciplined senses, a prey to all unhappiness ?

A God who is truly a Father, or a Father who is truly a God, could not but lay down for His children a kind of Decalogue of happiness, as He previously gave His servants the Commandments of the Law. Those stern and terrible decrees were given

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on Sinai, but we are justified in keeping our eyes turned towards a mountain less lofty and formidable, whence flow, as it were, streams of milk and honey—namely, the Beatitudes.

A human teacher, possessing mere fragments of truth and wisdom, could never include in one system both precepts and joys. Among men, the exercise of the sovereign will appears to be, as a rule, incompatible with that benevolent weakness which makes others happy. Human law is a mere figment unless it has a certain inflexibility ; and, on the other hand, goodness ceases to be good the moment that it becomes too imperious. It is only at rare intervals, or accidentally, that a human master, in the strict meaning of the word, can be our friend, or that a friend can venture to exert over us an absolute authority.

With God it is otherwise ; we speak of His sovereignty, His power, His goodness, and His love, but these are distinct only from our point of view and in the effects produced by them upon the world around us ; in reality, God is absolutely One, absolutely

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simple, possessed of all these attributes in virtue of one single, eternal, and essentially indivisible act. And the result is this: from the moment when this God gives men His unchanging and perfect laws, they form a code which is at once light, authority, and goodness. Each precept becomes a ray of light, by means of which men can seek with certainty both the glory of truth and the sweetness of love. This divine legislation includes morality and happiness, virtue and joy—the one serving to confirm and prove the divinity of the other. In other words, a code of morality which did not make us as happy as it is possible to be, would not be true morality at all, still less would it be such as God requires.

A principle of happiness that did not contain an equal amount of virtue would not be a just and holy principle, far less would it be divine. If, however, in one and the same ordinance we find both the highest degree of virtue, which it is possible to seek, and the greatest amount of enjoyment that we can imagine, we need hesitate no longer, for God alone could have devised and laid

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upon us so perfect and so sweet a yoke, so glorious and so light a burden.

It must not be supposed that these are arguments *a posteriori*, based on the sublime teaching of the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount. Long before the time of the Gospel—of that new law which is also the Good News—minds accustomed to contemplate the nature of God, or enlightened from above, perceived this close and organic connection, this kind of identity, which must unite in one truly divine code the law of God with the promise of happiness, the duty of practising virtue with the means of enjoying bliss. David expresses this idea in many different forms of poetical and sacred language. It stands as a keynote at the beginning of the Psalter: “Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, . . . his will is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he shall meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season, and his leaf shall not fall off; and all

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whatsoever he shall do, shall prosper" (Ps. i. 1-4).

The inspired poet never misses an opportunity of proclaiming the fact that God's law brings happiness. "The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls; the testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones. The justices of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts; the commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves, more to be desired than gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honey-comb" (Ps. xviii. 8-11).

Psalm cxviii. is undoubtedly the most marvellous treatise on general morality that has ever been written, and it is entirely devoted to this subject, even from the first verse: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." Here the prophet is still speaking of the ancient law, which appeared sweet and joyful to those able to comprehend the spirit so deeply hidden under its letter, but when

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he looks towards the future he emphasises still more the joyful aspect which is to characterise the perfect law of God: "The Lord is sweet and righteous, therefore He will give a law to sinners in the way. He will guide the mild in judgment; He will teach the meek His ways" (Ps. xxiv. 8, 9). When he expresses his longing for the New Law, he does so, insisting that it is essentially good: "Shew, O Lord, Thy ways to me, and teach me Thy paths. Direct me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art God my Saviour, and on Thee have I waited all the day long" (*ibid.* 5, 6). Surely it was in answer to all these appeals, prophecies, and definitions that the keynote of the New Law was proclaimed from Heaven as "peace to men of good will," and we cannot forget that our Saviour Himself described His code of laws as a yoke that is sweet and a burden that is light.

On the ground both of our faith and of the most justifiable arguments of natural religion, we can declare that God's law must at the same time be a code leading to happiness. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge

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the fact that the great majority of men, being free to accept or to reject this yoke, refuse to bear it. Must we conclude from this that we have been misled by the doctrines of our faith or deceived by philosophical arguments ?

Certainly not—for two reasons. In the first place, those who deny that putting into practice the teaching of the Beatitudes has power to cause happiness, have never honestly tried the experiment, and many of them are prejudiced against all contained in the Gospel. On the other hand, those holy and truly pious persons, who have tried to carry out the Gospel teaching, proclaim its truth courageously and steadfastly, and by conforming their lives to their principles they offer the guarantee of sincerity of which Seneca so pitifully failed to give an example. In speaking of St Benedict, St Gregory once charmingly remarked that the consideration of his life was an epitome of his rule, whilst his rule was an epitome of his life. The same words might be applied to any of the saints, for in the case of each his life bears witness to the evangelical Beatitudes, no less

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than does the Gospel itself. There have always been some men who, after testing both systems, have adopted irrevocably and with intense joy the Gospel teaching, or at least that which approximates most closely to it.

In the pagan world, for instance, we find Cleanthes, one of the greatest sages of antiquity, abandoning an easy and luxurious life to serve the field labourers of Athens; and, among Christians, we see St Augustine renouncing an evil life and rising to a high degree of chastity and love of God. The former found liberty of soul, which rendered him happy in a painful and servile way of life; the latter, in austerities, discovered joys with which no pleasure of the past was comparable. St Augustine has given us the result of his twofold experience in decisive words, which have the more weight because no one has ever ventured to question his genius or his sincerity. He says that it is easier for those who love God to conquer their passions than it is for those who love the world to satisfy them sometimes.

To these evidences of the truth of the

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Gospel teaching with regard to happiness, we can add another, inherent in the nature of the divine precepts, if they are well understood, which David expresses in the words *Justificata in semetipsa*—they are self-justified.

St Augustine says most truly that, in order to be happy, we must not be deceived, neither must we suffer nor fear anything; and Bossuet has made these words the text of one of his masterpieces. The infinite happiness of the elect consists in the fact that they possess truth, joy, and freedom from care; whereas those who live only in and for this world are unhappy, because they are perpetually deceived, frequently in pain, and their rare moments of joy are poisoned by the thought of losing them. The former possess God—that is to say, truth itself; the latter cleave to the dust and dream of fancied happiness. The former dwell in a land whence all sorrow is banished; the latter scarcely find means to support life in a country which produces brambles and devours its inhabitants. The former know that at last they have found rest, which will endure for ever; the latter see their goods,

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their joys, and their lives passing away, like waters that return no more, and know that all to which they cling is fleeting, threatened on all sides by dangers, and destined at last, like themselves, to die.

It is difficult to say which of these three sources of unhappiness is the worst. What can be more bitter than to learn to know the illusions of the world, the falsehoods of life, the weakness of love, the treachery of friends, the various deceptions to which we are subject even from ourselves, the hidden snares lurking beneath joys that promise much and fulfil nothing, and finally lead the wise man to exclaim : “ Laughter I counted error, and to mirth I said, Why art thou vainly deceived ? ” (Eccles. ii. 2).

What can be more painful than physical sufferings which no exercise of the will and no arguments can withhold from mercilessly torturing the animal nature ? What can be more disturbing or more chilling than to be unable to look at one's friends without thinking that death too is watching them and awaiting them—to find certainty only in threats and never in hopes ?

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Truly, if man had nothing to expect beyond this life, he might well envy the cattle, who think of nothing but their daily food, who diminish by their brute indifference the physical pains that they may suffer, and do not, by any unhappy forebodings, impair such satisfaction as their nature can enjoy.

Such being the sources of our unhappiness in this world, it is a marvellous conception that our future happiness is based on the full and complete possession of truth, joy, and immortality.

There is, however, an intermediate state between the misery of this life and the bliss of Heaven, and the Author of all good has, as it were, bridged the gulf which separates the two extremes. He has opened a region midway for those who long to leave the world of strife and cannot yet be admitted to perfect bliss. He has shown them a way, and those who follow it turn their backs on the unhappy land, and quit it with more or less haste as they advance towards the land of joy.

In proportion to their deliverance from evil, is their progress in acquiring happiness

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of mind and life. They leave the darkness and journey towards the light, and as the dangers, sorrows, and fears of the night are left behind the more can they enjoy the beauty and the increasing brilliancy of the dawn. Some rays of the full light bestowed eternally upon the blessed in Heaven seem to enlighten them.

They are not yet admitted to the unalloyed bliss of Paradise ; but the joy, awaiting them there, is already beginning, and, though imperfect, it is of the same kind as that which they will taste after death.

Such is the happiness offered in the Beatitudes even in this world to those who consent to make them their rule of life. They contain the first-fruits and foretaste of eternal bliss. We might almost fancy that the superabundant happiness of Heaven is being poured out beforehand on the earth, and that God is saying to the pilgrims here below : “ Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her ; rejoice for joy with her, all you that mourn for her. That you may suck and be filled with the breasts of her consolations, that you may

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milk out, and flow with delights from the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the Lord : Behold I will bring upon her as it were a river of peace, and as an overflowing torrent, the glory of the Gentiles which you shall suck; you shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you. As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem " (Isa. lxvi. 10-13).

If it is true that the eight Beatitudes, considered from the point of view of human philosophy, form a series of positive directions for the acquisition of moral joy and unfailing peace in this world, it is still more certain that this happiness possesses a supernatural character infinitely more important than the philosophical and human element. The Beatitudes contain the very substance of eternal bliss—the joy of Paradise—though in a lower and modified degree. They mark the beginning of that happiness which will be fully developed in the glory of Heaven; for the same root sends up tiny shoots in this world, which in the world to come will bear ripe and delicious fruit.

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St Thomas says on this subject: "The rewards promised in the Beatitudes will attain to their full perfection only in the future life, here we have a foretaste of them, for, according to St Augustine, by the 'kingdom of Heaven' we may understand the beginning of perfect wisdom, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit begins to reign in those who possess this kingdom. 'Possessing the land' expresses the affective state of the soul which rests already in firm hope of the inheritance referred to in the word 'land.' Likewise the soul is 'comforted' even in this world by participating in the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete or Comforter, and it is satisfied or 'filled' even now, with that mysterious food of which our Saviour spoke when He said: 'My meat is to do the will of My Father.' So also even here the soul 'obtains mercy'; it 'sees God' partially, thanks to the supernatural light bestowed upon the clean of heart; by its peace-making disposition, which makes it like unto God, it deserves the name of 'Child of God.' It is true that all this will be more complete and more perfect in our Heavenly

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home ; but as soon as a man begins to make progress in the Christian life his hopes of reaching the end of the way upon which he has entered—that is to say, of coming to his true home—become more and more confident.”

The essential point of this explanation is that, when a soul enters into the spirit of the Beatitudes, it is thenceforth in possession of the Holy Spirit ; and to be so inspired is the very quintessence of happiness, for the inspiration applies its action to the centre of the soul, and touches the mainspring of all felicity.

Men know this instinctively ; they desire to be roused to enthusiasm in some way, so as to escape from themselves. Wine, opium, love, warfare, the triumphs of ambition and glory—all are welcome, provided they bring with them their peculiar intoxication, which is at one and the same time forgetfulness of pain, a remedy for weariness, and a release from self.

Wine holds the lowest, and the Holy Spirit the highest, place in the scale, and they mark the two extremes where this rapture may be

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sought. Wine has a spirit, for it dislodges the human mind to take its place ; and the Spirit of God resembles wine in its action, for, like wine, it makes men beside themselves. When the Apostles went forth from the Cenacle on the day of Pentecost, filled with the Holy Spirit, the Jews took them to be drunk with wine. St Paul points out the likeness between the two kinds of intoxication, as well as the great difference between them, when he bids the Ephesians “ be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury, but be ye filled with the Holy Spirit ” (v. 18).

We might carry the analogy further still. What distinguishes the truest human wisdom from divine wisdom is that the former resembles water, sometimes deep and clear, but insipid, and incapable of feeding any flame, though it may suffice to allay the evil fires that consume the heart of man ; whereas divine Wisdom is the nectar which warms, strengthens, and gladdens, kindling heroism and love, and she says to her disciples : “ Come and drink the wine which I have mingled for you ” (Prov. ix. 5).

Such is, in the supernatural sense, the

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happiness offered by the Gospel to those who accept its teaching in its entirety.

Does human existence, as we see it, disprove this teaching? By no means; a few moments' calm reflection will throw light from all sides, within and without, upon its truth. In spite of everything, in spite even of ourselves, the nature of things, the condition of men, and our own experience agree upon this point. There are two classes of people in this world whose lives are wholly opposed to one another, although for very different reasons they both value life equally. One class consists of those who live for pleasure, or work only under compulsion; the other of those who sacrifice themselves and submit to voluntary and heroic toil. The former enjoy to the full all earthly advantages, the latter of their own accord deprive themselves of what might seem to be absolute necessities. In the pursuit of pleasure, the former display an energy equal to that of the latter in their desire of mortification. Which class gives utterance to lamentations and complaints? Where do we find real and abiding cheerfulness? Who

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are the more apt to suffer from weariness of mind, tedium, and melancholy, and who day by day value their mode of life the more highly, as if each day increased its attraction for them ?

If the apparently unhappy in this world could imagine what feelings fill the minds of those whom they envy, they would be convinced that money, glory, and honours are great advantages only in the eyes of such as do not possess them. We often hear it said of a rich man that he does not know the value of money. Great men in public life often feel more pleasure in returning to their own fireside, than in receiving the applause of the multitude. Many worldly people when dressing for an evening entertainment mutter : ‘ What a nuisance ! ’ In general, the chief thing for which they desire to have money is amusement, and occasionally they seek amusement as a means of gaining money. Often, both at once attract people to worldly entertainments. We see them drinking or dancing together, and scarcely think how many are present with no thought of amusement, but with a view

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to business, to catch a husband or to make money. What a drudgery! Money for the sake of amusement, amusement for the sake of money, entertainments for the sake of either or of both! Surely this is a vicious circle, an endless disturbance, a constant succession of weary duties. Would it not be better to remain in peace or to seek what we need elsewhere?

As to our own experience—meaning thereby the experience and the confidential statements of those who fancy that they alone lead a life worthy to be called life at all—it is still more fatal to all illusions.

Listen to me, man of mature years, whoever you may be. For a moment you fancied life to be full of promise, and your delight was great. You had striven hard for success, and many fortunate coincidences had contributed to enable you to attain to it, but when once the battle was won, the conquest made, and your fortune assured, what was the result? You found yourself again, such as you are, and your life continued to be the same miserable existence—a stream whose flow you cannot check, with deceptive

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images on the surface and mud at the bottom.

For a moment you thought that you had found a place wherein to rest ; a house well situated, well arranged, and well furnished, and you took much interest in planning what was to be at least the setting of happiness, if not happiness itself—and yet when you came to occupy it, you found yourself again, such as you are.

For a moment you thought that you had found rest for your heart. Some beauty of form or of mind or of intellect, or perhaps of all three together, attracted you and then loved you. A human being, as this of all created things bears the greatest resemblance to God, has power to cause the greatest semblance of happiness. But when you tasted the fruit, you discovered that this being was nothing more than other men or other women, nothing more than you yourself, and you thus found yourself again twice over—in this being and in yourself—such as you really are.

Attempt now to find in yourself, your conscience, and your life some argument

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against the wisdom that speaks thus to you :

If you would fain not be unhappy, ask nothing of matter, expect little of human beings, and hope everything of death.

If you would fain not be deceived, lean not on the illusions of life, build not on the flowing stream of time, trust not too much to philosophy, have very small confidence in yourself.

If you would fain avoid danger, have faith first in God, then in your own conscience, sometimes in men, and never in your own fancies and passions.

If you would fain be happy, begin by never asking of life what it cannot give, and do not regard as a condition of happiness wealth, which is a bondage ; nor love, which is a poison ; nor promises of an earthly future, for they are only snares and pitfalls. Consider who promises you happiness. If it be a man, ask for his credentials, ascertain whether he is himself happy, if he has the power to keep his word, examine his character, his ability, his life, and (if he has passed away) his death. If you would think twice

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before accepting his statement when it is merely a question of opinion, how much more careful does it behove you to be, when your peace, honour, joy, and destiny are all at stake.

Remember that no one is happy here below save those who are inspired, and ask yourself how art, philosophy, patriotism, or party spirit can inspire you if you are not an artist, nor a philosopher, nor happy in your own country, nor skilful in politics. And that is not all. Ask yourself what will be left to you when those fleeting inspirations that we call youth, enthusiasm, and love have passed away in their season.

There is only one inspiration that is deep, strong, and unfailing, for it proceeds from an infinite source and goes on towards an infinite goal. It alone depends upon no particular accident of genius, youth, or birth; in order to be influenced by its lifegiving breath, it is sufficient to be a man, to believe in God and to love Him.

If you would be convinced, you have at your disposal something better than all arguments. Find out for yourself by a practical

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test whether the Beatitudes of the Gospel, austere, heroic, and superhuman laws as they appear to be, do not really contain a hidden sweetness ; whether the manna of happiness does not fall on their apparently dreary teaching, and a fresh and abundant fountain spring from the rock that seems so rugged and so bare.

Before studying the Beatitudes in detail we must discuss three questions :

1. Did our divine Master intend them to be really a code of happiness ?

2. Do they form a truly systematical, logical, and complete statement of eudæmonism, setting forth in order all that strictly belongs to the question of happiness, denouncing in general terms whatever is opposed to it, and pointing out all that tends to it ?

3. Was not this conception of happiness, as a whole, firmly rooted in religion before the promulgation of the Gospel ?

The importance of these three questions cannot be denied. If our Lord, when He uttered the Beatitudes, intended to make

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us heroic rather than happy, then the task that we have in view is a visionary undertaking, full of illusions and falsehood, and to carry it further would be both unseemly and wrong.

Again, if the Beatitudes are merely a short collection of stray aphorisms, unconnected with each other, and chosen at random, it would be absurd to think of constructing, with these grains of sand or these few precious stones, the outline of a work which aims at including without exception all the elements of our happiness in this world and the next. Finally, if in the Old Testament, we find no traces and no suggestion of this eudæmonistic system, our confidence in it will be shaken. The same God will be seen to have had before the Incarnation, a conception of human happiness differing from that subsequently set forth. We should have no reason to wonder if the New Law were clearer, more exact, and more perfect than the Old Law, but we should be at a loss to account for any difference, other than that of degree, between the two. We should expect to find the same thoughts, clad,

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indeed, in different words, adapted to various epochs and to men of dissimilar stages of culture, but spoken in the same voice, if we were not to doubt the identity of their Author.

Let us begin, therefore, by giving a short answer to these three questions.

There can be no question that our Saviour, when He uttered the Beatitudes, intended to teach us certain virtues characteristic of Christianity, wishing to make us happier even in this life by means of these new laws. In proclaiming those to be blessed who should follow the path which He pointed out, undoubtedly He had, primarily and chiefly, the joys of Paradise in view, for it is impossible to interpret otherwise the expressions : they shall see God ; they shall be called the children of God ; theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. But, granting this, no one will venture to maintain that other promises : they shall possess the land ; they shall be comforted ; they shall have their fill (*i.e.* of justice), refer exclusively to the future joys of eternity, and admit of no

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partial and proportionate realisation in this life. Whatever the aim indicated and the result hereafter, each Beatitude has a very present happiness as its beginning or, I may even say, as its foundation : *Beati estis—Blessed are ye.*

Under the ancient law, God did not systematically keep men's happiness in sight. There was no Gospel of Good News on Sinai. The Old Law commands and threatens, and the orders are given in a stern and authoritative voice. It was only later, that Moses could point out the happy results of this strict law. It is quite otherwise with the New Law. It is made known by One with a gentle voice, and eyes revealing nothing but mercy, amidst scenes of woodland beauty, under a cloudless sky, and the law enforces nothing but happiness. On Sinai, between thunderclaps, were heard the words : "Thou shalt serve." Here a sweet voice repeats with every phrase : "Be happy"—"happy are ye if. . . ."

The new Lawgiver will have no other form of words ; between Him and humanity, reconciled in grace and peace, there must be

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nothing but happiness—now and in the future ; happiness in His Heavenly kingdom, in its fulness of light, and in God's everlasting mercy ; but happiness, too, amidst the poverty of this world, in the present defeats, in the persecutions, sorrows, and tears of life.

A merely superficial survey of the Beatitudes is enough to convince us that we have present in them in a very high degree the only three elements of happiness existent in this world—viz. (1) the suppression as far as possible of all causes of suffering—which we may call the negative element ; (2) the introduction of the principle of psychological action, the most intense spiritual activity—which is the positive element ; and (3) a boundless hope, based on the fullest certainty, supported and strengthened by substantial nourishment, directed towards horizons of which the wonders surpass our most ambitious and unrestrained imagination. Can we, then, suppose that our Saviour, who floods our present life with happiness, had no intention of making us happy when He uttered the Beatitudes ?

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Were we to attempt to discuss the value of these arguments we should have to refer to our Lord's explicit statements and to the recorded facts which occur on every page of the New Testament, and prove that the Beatitudes influence our life here for happiness. Let us select for each Beatitude some one saying or event that seems to refer to it or to explain its meaning. With the first, which proclaims the poor in spirit blessed, we may compare those solemn and oft-quoted words of our Saviour : " Amen I say to you, there is no one who hath left all for My sake and for the gospel, who shall not receive an hundred times as much, now in this time."

This hundredfold happiness consists in that joy of soul which is acquired at the cost of pleasure of the senses and sacrifice of the affections, and this joy is so exalted and so calm that it can continue to exist in spite of the most severe material sufferings, even amidst persecutions. It was His clear perception of this joy that caused such sorrow in the soul of the young man, who had not the courage to leave all, and to renounce his wealth to follow our Saviour.

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The second Beatitude, in which the meek and humble are called blessed, receives the strongest possible confirmation in the Gospel. Nowhere in the history of mankind is there recorded any outburst of joy comparable with that of which the Magnificat was the expression. Mary's heart poured forth this canticle of boundless exultation, in which humility is an essential part, inseparable from the joy, for it formed the groundwork upon which grace could act in order to produce this unrivalled gladness. The power of humility to cause happiness in this life is revealed in so many places in the Gospel, that it would be almost impossible to select and refer to all the acts and words that might confirm this truth. However, we study the Gospel—as a history, as a source of consolation, hope, and joy in this life; whether we dwell on benefits conferred or doctrines inculcated, on gladness infused into men's hearts or on comfort poured into their souls, we arrive at the same result, and find that through humility the humble and meek have enjoyed far greater happiness here below than fortune's favourites have

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derived from all their riches and honours collectively.

The Beatitude of those who weep, considered with reference to present happiness, is exemplified in Mary Magdalene, and our Saviour Himself asserted that, even on earth, she had tasted the promised delights. On the day when Martha was busy about much serving, and complained that her sister left her alone to serve, Jesus said : “ Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.” She must, therefore, have already possessed it, for it would be impossible to speak of taking away what she had not yet received.

Nor can we fail to see in the delight felt by Zacheus the immediate reward of the feelings of justice and mercy that filled his heart after our Saviour’s visit. The rich publican who gives the half of his goods to the poor, and restores fourfold whatever he has wrongfully acquired, is the man who comes eagerly, runs to and fro, climbs the tree, and then comes down, makes haste, and with all joy welcomes Jesus to his house. The Gospel describes that he acted thus—

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gaudens — rejoicing. This is evidently a striking instance of the fulfilment in this life of the promise made to those who hunger and thirst after justice.

The Beatitude in which mercy is promised to the merciful is also exemplified in the story of Zacheus; and still more in the account of the hospitality shown at Bethany to the Son of Man when He was wandering, not having where to lay His Head; and most fully of all, in the description of the magnificent feast prepared in the gladness of his heart by the Father of the Prodigal Son.

If the clean of heart seek in the Gospel some ground for anticipating joy in this present life, they will find it at the outset in the ecstasy of Simeon, the just man, whose words express the feelings of all who here obtain possession of God; and again, at the end of our Lord's life there is the silent rapture of St John, the beloved disciple, as he rests his head upon his Master's bosom.

As the joy of the peacemakers proceeds from the privileges bestowed upon those who are the children of God, we must seek its manifestation in Jesus Himself, for He is

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the First-born, and the display of His joy must be in some way such as befits a King. Doubtless, this explains why Jesus was greeted triumphantly with joyful acclamations as the Son of David, on the eve of the arraignment before the tribunal of an unjust judge, where, in the face of a cruel death, He showed Himself to be the Prince of Peace, He was greeted as the Son of David, in the most joyous and sweet triumph. Only the songs of Paradise can surpass in beauty the hosannas of Palm Sunday, raised in honour of Him, of whom the prophet foretold that He should come to Jerusalem, meek, and sitting upon an ass.

Finally, the last Beatitude has its illustration in the New Testament. Actual persecution was not to begin until after our Saviour's death, therefore it is not in the Gospels that we must look for an instance of the truth of the words: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake." The first Christians, however, had not long to wait; very early in the Acts of the Apostles we read that the Apostles, after being scourged, went from the presence of the council rejoicing

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that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus (v. 41).

It would be a mistake to regard the Beatitudes as independent of one another, as so many isolated prescriptions for obtaining fragments of happiness here below in some empirical fashion.

On the contrary, connected and interwoven, they form a system of eudæmonism complete in every meaning of the word.

It may be laid down as a principle of the philosophy of happiness, that every obstacle to it is in matter—either in that which is foreign to us, but amidst which we live, or in the corporal matter of which we are partly composed.

Now, detachment from matter, viewed under this double aspect, must inevitably cause some amount of pain, but it is not a fatal or unavoidable pain, without hope of any compensation, such as we suffer as a result of our attachment to matter. This pain is capable of being transformed into enjoyment and happiness of mind, as soon as it becomes a sure ground of hope. To perceive the truth of this statement we need

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only consider the toils, dangers, and contests voluntarily encountered by workmen, traders and soldiers, who, in view of the advantage for which they hope, would deem it a misfortune to have no task to perform, no ocean to cross, no war to wage. When once this principle is established, there is no further difficulty in following the logical and harmonious sequence, the deep interconnection, and the regular gradation of the Beatitudes.

First of all, the two kinds of detachment are indicated, and the duty of practising both is laid down as the foundation of the system. Blessed are the poor in spirit—here we have detachment from worldly goods. Blessed are the pure in heart—here we have the second degree of detachment, renunciation more or less absolute of the material life of the senses and of the passionate instincts which disturb and defile the soul. This twofold renunciation, by removing all possible causes of suffering, supplies the negative element of happiness in this world, but each renunciation entails certain consequences ; each has its own sacrifices and promises, and

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consequently its own hopes. This is why our Saviour has appended to each of these fundamental Beatitudes, others that result from and complete them, and reveal plainly their consequences, which are painful, indeed, to our nature, but are none the less beneficial to the soul that is athirst for happiness.

Attachment to worldly goods causes a spirit of rivalry, bitterness in the struggle for life and money, and awakens that dangerous instinct of self-love or interest which sets men in antagonism one with another. *Blessed are the meek*—they lose nothing by having no share in the contests of the age. *They shall possess the land.* It is true that, if they live in poverty here, they will be unhappy in the human acceptation of the word; for all forms of misery seem to be felt by the poor, and he who has no money appears to lack all earthly goods, yet the following Beatitude teaches: *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.* The comfort is not to be given at once. From time to time in this world God will bestow some partial consolation, but full compensation will come only after death; meanwhile the

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just must endure to see sinners prospering, tyrants triumphing, and rogues of every description living in wealth and festivities. It will be their lot to be parched with thirst and tortured with hunger—the hunger and thirst for that Justice which will assign to each his due and will judge according to their respective merits both insolent wrongdoing and obscure labour. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.*

This is not all—it might be so, if the just were isolated here below and if the members of Christ could live apart from one another ; but this is not the case. All those detached from the things of earth form one united body—and, apart from special designs of Providence, they must not die in consequence of their virtue—and so one more Beatitude is added to complete the first group, teaching men : *Blessed are the merciful*, who have pity on their unhappy brethren, *for they shall obtain mercy.*

The second group of Beatitudes, referring to purity of heart and to the partial or complete sacrifice of our natural instincts

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and senses, is equally perfect, and arranged with no less divine skill.

The first effect of a life of concupiscence is to make a man violent, irritable, jealous, and sometimes savage. The disastrous influences of impure love on the peace of mankind is one of the most obvious lessons learnt from history. Concupiscence gives rise to war, hatred, and rapine, to brutal oppression and to furious rivalry. More than any other passion it is ready to strike, kill, and massacre, and this reason led our divine Master to complete the code of those who seek happiness in purity of heart by adding two more Beatitudes—one declaring the peacemakers to be blessed, and the other encouraging and consoling the victims of violence and persecution.

From whatever point of view we regard the Beatitudes, they form one systematic and compact whole, so close and so logical is the connection between them.

St Augustine saw in them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, collectively and singly. He says: "I find in these sentences the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit as given by Isaías,

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but there is one difference—the prophet begins with the most perfect, and in the Gospel the lowest stands first. The prophet begins with Wisdom and ends with Fear of the Lord, but the Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. If we arrange them in an ascending scale we have : Fear of the Lord, Piety, Knowledge, Fortitude, Counsel, Understanding, and Wisdom. Those who possess the fear of the Lord are the humble, of whom it is said : *Blessed are the poor* ; they are not proud nor puffed up, and follow the Apostle's words ' Be not high-minded, but fear ' (Rom. xi. 20). Piety belongs to the meek, who avoid strife and resistance, and of them it is written : *Blessed are the meek*. Knowledge draws forth tears from those, who learn from Holy Scripture into how many evils their ignorance of what is good and expedient has plunged them, and to such the words *Blessed are those that weep* are applicable. Fortitude is needful for those who hunger and thirst after what is truly good, and to whom reference is made in the next Beatitude : *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice*. Counsel belongs to those

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discreet souls who know that mercy is won for themselves by showing it to others, according to the promise: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* Understanding is the gift bestowed upon the pure in heart, who see what the outward eye has never seen, and hear what the ear has never heard, and comprehend what the heart has never imagined, as it is written: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Wisdom, finally, is the gift of the peacemakers, who are blessed, because in them all is regulated and in order, the senses are subservient to reason, and reason is subject to God " (Aug. Serm. Dom. in Monte, i. iv.).

There are two remarks to make upon this extract. St Augustine interprets the words *Beati pauperes* as meaning " Blessed are the humble," and he does not mention the eighth Beatitude, or rather he seems to blend it with the seventh.

St Thomas Aquinas supplements St Augustine by pointing out, with wonderful skill, the links connecting the rewards promised in the successive Beatitudes and

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their arrangement in an ascending scale. He says that the poor have a claim to the kingdom of Heaven, and this is a great thing ; but the meek actually possess it, which is far more ; whilst those who weep, enjoy the consolations of Paradise—and to enjoy is more than to possess, as possession does not usually exclude pain. Those who hunger and thirst are filled, and to be filled implies an idea of greater abundance than is suggested by mere possession or enjoyment ; whilst the merciful, to whom mercy is promised, have yet more, for they are not only filled, but possess a superabundance, beyond what can be earned or claimed as a right. To the pure in heart it is given to rejoice in their King—a favour far greater than that of enjoying His kingdom. And, finally, the persecuted are called the children of God—a greater honour, a loftier dignity, and a closer connection with God than the honour, dignity, and connection of those who dwell in His kingdom and hold the position of courtiers about their King. (*Cf.* I.^o II.^o Q. lxxix. art. iv. ad. 3.)

There is yet another point of view from

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which we may consider the Beatitudes. They seem to grow out of one another, and to stand in a kind of genealogical sequence. The absolute harmony which controlled the intellectual conceptions of our Saviour, appears in them in all its beauty. The connection between them may be indicated briefly as follows :—

Poverty or detachment from worldly goods engenders humility. As we read in the book of Proverbs (xviii. 23): “The poor will speak with supplications, and the rich will speak roughly.” The poor are the first to be declared blessed, and after them come the meek and humble, and the latter are they that mourn. “As one mourning and sorrowful, so was I humbled,” exclaims David (Ps. xxxiv. 14). Women, children, and the weak give way to weeping ; the proud refrain from tears, and self-conscious strength has no need of them. Therefore the blessing pronounced upon those who weep, comes rightly after that referring to the meek.

Tears beget hope. Even at the height of his sufferings Job exclaims : “My hope is laid up in my bosom ” (xix. 27); and St Paul

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bids the widow that is desolate trust in God. When we suffer we long for and expect relief, justice, and compensation. "Keep mercy and judgment, and hope in thy God always" are the words of the prophet Osee (xii. 6). This is why the blessing upon those who weep in hope, is naturally followed by that upon those who hunger and thirst for justice.

And if love of justice rises above itself, and leads to something higher, we come to a new degree of perfection. Love is the fulfilling of the law ; therefore blessed are the merciful.

Again, when hunger and thirst for justice are fully realised, the immediate result is great purity of conscience. The divine Wisdom tells us that evil men think not on judgment, but they that seek after the Lord take notice of all things ; and St John says that "everyone who hath hope in God sanctifieth himself, as God also is holy." "Blessed are the pure in heart."

Purity of soul in its turn produces peace. Our Saviour acknowledged this fact when He said to St Mary Magdalene : "Thy sins

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are forgiven thee—go in peace.” Blessed are the peacemakers. They endure persecution, calumny, and hatred ; they are lambs in the midst of wolves ; they are patient for love of peace, and for love of God, who maintains that peace in their hearts. Blessed are they that suffer persecution.

It is impossible for us to do more than form some general idea of the connection that exists between the Beatitudes, in virtue of which they make up one harmonious whole. If they were examined more closely on the lines indicated, they would reveal more fully their symmetrical construction, but it is well to begin with a brief outline, just as in viewing a cathedral, it is well to grasp the proportions and the general design before going on to admire the solidity of its foundations.

Just as the whole moral teaching of the Gospel may be described as a development of that contained in the eight Beatitudes, so the Beatitudes themselves are an expansion of our Saviour’s brief and pregnant words : “ If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me.”

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The teaching of each Beatitude may be found in this saying, which itself in its opening words suggests another of our divine Master's utterances: "If any man thirst." The likeness seems too great not to be intentional—and surely the thirst mentioned must be the thirst for happiness.

It remains for us now to answer the third question—viz: Is the system of eudæmonism laid down in the Beatitudes of the Gospel so completely new and superhuman as to be essentially opposed to the loftiest conceptions of human wisdom, and to the notion of happiness, as presented to the Jews in the Old Testament?

We have good reason to examine the matter. St Paul himself acknowledges that the Gospel ideal is to the Gentiles folly and to the Jews a stumbling-block; whilst St Augustine declares that philosophers have overlooked many paths leading to happiness. Our ideal, therefore, is in opposition to the philosophical opinions of the latter class of men and to the religious views of the former.

We may assert that the Gentiles, being pagans with no knowledge of God, had no

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conception of any happiness beyond the gratification of their sensual desires ; and the Jewish people appears to have limited its aspirations and hopes to the triumph of Israel over His enemies, especially as such a triumph would involve the pillage and expulsion of all foes and the enjoyment of the material advantages of peace for His own nation. In some places the language of Moses and the prophets seems to support this vulgar and gross conception of happiness, but we must be cautious in thus interpreting the sacred texts, for the actions of a people fallen into sensuality cannot affect the character of what is essential to the doctrines of a philosophical system or of a religion that is strongly expressed therein. The noblest efforts of the human mind, as well as the purest expressions of Jewish piety, bear a striking resemblance to the evangelical doctrines. The same truth, the same inspiration are present in all. Human wisdom can, no doubt, discover only some wavering principles, which are, as it were, mere fragments, broken columns, and scattered débris amidst the devastation of the intellect or of

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primitive tradition, but still they suffice to prove that the style of the monument was the same, and has not changed. The clouds which enveloped the Jewish revelation, may have caused a confusion of shadows and figures, which human passions sometimes obscured and falsified, but it is not difficult to perceive the sun in the background, or hidden below the horizon. There is no more interesting task than that of proving the connection which exists between the Beatitudes on the one hand, and the highest and purest teaching on morality and eudæmonism as evolved by paganism and Judaism on the other.

The points of resemblance between the Gospel teaching concerning renunciation and the Stoic doctrines are so striking and so marked, that impious men have dared—as everyone knows—to regard the latter as the original, and the former as the copy, elaborated and flavoured with mysticism. In the eyes of the enemies of the Church, Crates, Zeno, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Seneca have a much better claim than Jesus Christ to be regarded as the first teachers of Chris-

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tian renunciation ; of seeking happiness in austerity of life. It is, moreover, because of this agreement that Christianity finds so much to admire in the writings of Plato and in the life of Socrates. One of the finest passages in Pascal's "Pensées" deals with the Gospel standard of morality as reached by Epictetus. Did not his "Manual," after undergoing a few alterations, become the rule of St Nilus and the hermits of Mount Sinai ? The famous Cardinal Francesco Barbarini the elder, nephew of Pope Urban VIII., was engaged shortly before his death in translating the "Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius," and he dedicated his translation to his own soul, "to make it blush a deeper hue than his purple, at the sight of this pagan's virtues."

Let no one maintain that this harmony is a matter of some school of philosophy or of special opinions. It proceeds from the very foundation of our reason, and occurs not only in the doctrines of the deepest thinkers and most celebrated philosophers among the ancients, but also in those of the most powerful modern philosophers, even when they are

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avowed enemies of our Faith. From this point of view, many pages of Schopenhauer are most curious, and Kant's moral theories are very striking. In his book entitled "Metaphysical Principles of Morals" Kant inculcates a very strict asceticism, and does so in the name of the highest philosophy and of man's greatest happiness. For instance, although he vilifies the monastic life, he goes so far as to declare that a violation of chastity is a more grievous crime than suicide.

Philosophy is certainly one of the sources of truth, but this source is inadequate, vague, often disturbed, and intermittent. Judaism, on the other hand, is something supernatural, proceeding directly from God, and its resemblances with the Gospel are far more numerous and striking; in fact, there is identity—the only difference is in the degree of light that they respectively diffuse. We expect to find in the Gospel the truth stated more clearly, decisively, and perfectly than in the Old Testament, but, nevertheless, substantially the same truth in both. There is not one truth for the Gospels and another

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for Judaism ; for truth of its nature is one. Without here seeking to examine in detail this agreement between the two Testaments, we cannot fail to notice the likeness that exists between certain passages in the Psalms and in the books of Solomon on the one hand, and the Sermon on the Mount on the other. We might almost say that the books of the Old Testament contain an early edition of the Beatitudes, or rather, perhaps, a commentary issued before the text was given by our Saviour. However, neither philosophy nor the Jewish revelation attained to the perfection and sublimity of the evangelical Beatitudes. Philosophy could teach the emptiness of the things of this world, and could deliver some few men of exalted intellect from the tyranny of matter. It freed the human soul from its illusions, but gave it nothing in compensation for their loss. It had no power to teach that above this world there is a Being infinitely worthy of love, and there are things so far superior to life itself that men would be ready to die for their sake.

The Stoic bids us be free, and face calmly

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whatever may befall, remembering that we are men—beings destined to die. This is a rough and stern doctrine, but it amounts to nothing more than a harsh order hurled at slaves, containing no reference to happiness.

But the Gospel, shedding upon us infinitely more light, strength, and consolation, bids us lift up our heads. It seems to say: "Remember, O man, that thou art not a lifelong prisoner, a galley-slave with no hope of release. Thy life is sufficiently serious, thy conscience is sufficiently great, thy virtue sufficiently holy, to call forth God's justice and to arouse His love. Love, for thou art loved. Act righteously, for His divine goodness hath begotten thee and compassed thee about. Act wisely, for thou art a child of light."

Judaism, undoubtedly, revealed the same truths, but only partially, for the veil was not yet lifted. Men knew God, but they did not know His love, for it had not yet been displayed to them, and so their ideal of happiness never embraced anything beyond the confines of Judea, and it scarcely rose higher than the pinnacles of the Temple.

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Great gulfs still remained to be crossed ; for, indeed, there is an immense abyss between dreaming of the triumph of Israel, and looking forward to the kingdom of God ; between enjoying in peace the fruit of one's own fig-tree or drinking the juice of one's own vines and being filled with justice and with enthusiasm for the truth ; between beholding God's glory and seeing God Himself ; between being His champions on earth and His sons in Heaven. Deep gulfs separate the past from the present, and we realise their extent when we hear God saying : " You have heard that it was said to them of old, Thou shalt not kill . . . but I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. . . . It was said . . . Thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say to you that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart. . . . It was said to them of old, Thou shalt not forswear thyself . . . but I say to you not to swear at all. . . . It hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy, but I say to you, Love your

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enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you. . . . If you love them that love you, . . . what do you more? do not also the heathens this? Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 21-48).

In consequence of this advance in virtue and of this growth of hope there is a proportionate increase in the happiness to which we may aspire here below, although neither the character of that happiness nor the law which governs it is changed. Every man born, after the Beatitudes were made known, is called, not only to greater sanctity, but also to greater happiness. He may desire it more ardently than any Epicurean, and may pursue it with more energy than any Stoic, but he must not hope to find it apart from the Gospel.

It is true that man is made for happiness, and it is equally true that he can attain to it, only by following the steep and rugged paths of duty—but it is also true that He, who created man, knows what is essential to his happiness, and holds it in His hand,

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ready to bestow the gift when it has been earned.

God is too just not to give this bread to His servants ; too generous and too good not to offer this wine to His friends ; and too wise to leave His creation incomplete, plunged in a hopeless sorrow.

This was all true before the Sermon on the Mount was uttered, in which God requires of us to be happy here, that we may be happier still in eternity.

THE POOR IN SPIRIT

I

“BLESSED are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”

The poor in spirit are those who do not cling to any earthly possessions ; if they have no wealth, they do not desire it ; if they are rich, they care but little for their riches. They are free from that fatal passion which attracts the souls of men so powerfully towards what have been called the two metals of hell—viz. gold and silver.

Bossuet says : “ Blessed are the poor in spirit ; not only those who, by embracing voluntary poverty, have left all to follow Jesus, for He has promised them a hundred-fold reward in this time and in the world to come life everlasting ; but blessed too, are those whose hearts are detached from the things of earth ; who, being poor, bear their

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poverty in patience and without murmuring, or who, being rich, have no spirit of riches, are not haughty, proud, unjust, nor eager for their own advantage. Their happiness is rightly described by the glorious title of 'kingdom.' ” They have not the spirit of riches, as Bossuet calls it, and this spirit is more forcibly denounced in the Gospel than are riches themselves. The Psalmist speaks of “men of riches”—that is to say, men who are under the dominion of wealth, and not its masters (Ps. lxxv. 6). There is no middle course—money must be either master or slave ; it crushes a man or he tramples upon it. This is why he who is free from the spirit of riches, which enslaves even kings by means of vain display, pride, injustice, and an insatiable greed for self-advantage, is exalted above kings, being himself a king in the highest and superhuman sense of the word, for he possesses the kingdom of Heaven.

This is the exact and undeniable meaning of the first Beatitude. In Bossuet we are always sure to find not only the exact truth, but also the Christian tradition.

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There is, therefore, no discrepancy between the teaching of the Gospels and the fundamental idea of happiness as conceived by even the most elementary philosophy. What then, is the source of suffering? It proceeds from the fact that our desires are not proportionate to our means of satisfying them, for our desires are boundless, and our means of satisfying them are almost ridiculously small. The greater a man's desires, the greater his unhappiness, and the more truly is he poor, though he may possess wealth. In vain will he heap up money; he will never be more than apparently rich as long as his desire of being still richer, increases at the same time. He may truly be said to increase his poverty. True riches are not distinguished from true poverty by the amount of money possessed, but by the degree of detachment attained. Absolute detachment, the spirit of poverty, is needed if a man is to enjoy true happiness. It is extremely doubtful whether the Epicurean ideal of happiness as found in the golden mean (according to Horace) is capable of realisation. Such happiness exists only when

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our desires are limited by our possessions, but as long as desires are not completely dead within us, they are sure to aim at something that we have not, for what is already possessed has ceased to be an object of desire.

Therefore Horace's hypothesis brings us to this conclusion: if a man is to desire nothing, he must either possess all that is desirable or be dead. The dream of a golden mean cannot be realised, as, when we consider the matter, we find that either the mean disappears or the man who is to enjoy it.

Seneca, on the other hand, asks with reason, what a man can want who has ceased to desire anything, and this question is only another way of expressing the meaning of the Beatitude: Blessed are those who have not the spirit of riches. It matters little whether a man be rich or poor, provided that he is free from desires that might harass and trouble him. "Blessed is the rich man that . . . hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures. Who is he, and we will praise

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him?" (Ecclus. xxxi. 8). Such a man has, indeed, the spirit of poverty, and may claim a share in the blessing given to the poor. In the same way Seneca says (*De Vita Beata*. xxii.): "If the rich man has treasures, they are only in his money-chest, and not in his heart." And St Augustine expresses the same idea when he declares true poverty to be in the soul, and not in the purse.

One of the finest passages in Xenophon's "Symposium" deserves quotation here, for it not only draws the same distinction clearly and forcibly, but it shows that true wisdom may be found in books both sacred and profane, and, therefore, the teaching of the Gospels cannot be criticised on that score. "I am of opinion, my friends, that riches exist not in our dwellings, but in our souls. I see many men, who possess great wealth, deeming themselves, nevertheless, so poor that, in order to increase their property, they undergo every hardship and face every danger. I even know two brothers whose fortunes are equal, but the one finds that he has enough and to spare, whilst the other has not the means of satisfying his desires.

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Some kings have such a thirst for riches, that they commit crimes of which the very poorest would be ashamed."

In referring to the spirit as the seat of happiness, the first Beatitude strikes the keynote of the whole matter. Joy and grief concern the spirit alone ; it is true that whatever makes us happy or unhappy must affect us first, by way of the senses, but it must go on to influence our imagination, and finally our will, our spirit, our inmost self.

Sensations that are usually considered most delightful leave us indifferent, or even arouse disgust in us, if our imaginations are not in sympathy with them. For instance, silkworms cooked in the Chinese fashion are delicious—at least so we are told by those who have overcome their repugnance and have tasted them. Why do we not all esteem them a delicacy ?

Again, the imagination may be flattered, and yet no pleasure is felt, if at the same time the will is roused to opposition. For instance, the sight of a burning house may be imposing to the spectators, but it is far from being so to the owner of the house.

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It is plain, therefore, that the decision rests with our minds, as to whether a thing renders us happy or unhappy—in themselves, external circumstances are merely indifferent causes.

This is why the Gospel teaches us not to make our happiness or unhappiness depend upon the acquisition or the loss of riches, but rather upon the attitude of our own will with regard to them. Whether we possess them or not, the moment that they cease to affect our will, they lose the power to cause suffering. Between them and us, there is thenceforth a kind of neutral zone of indifference, across which their evil influence cannot make itself felt, and we are safe from it.

But if, on the contrary, our will clings to the riches we possess, we are inevitably a prey to anxiety, troubles, anger, pride, disdain, and weariness, for they bring all these in their train, without offering any compensation beyond some deceptive and fleeting pleasures. If our will clings to riches that we do not possess, their absence causes even greater suffering than their presence, for the

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state of enforced poverty has not those miserable compensations which fall to the lot of the slaves of wealth.

We must notice further with regard to the word *spiritu*—in spirit—that evangelical poverty is not the cynicism of Diogenes, nor the pride of Zeno, nor the carelessness of Epicurus. No low or coarse feelings, no vain and boastful theories, no recklessness or fear of constraint, teaches a Christian to practise detachment from worldly goods. He sees that, by means of poverty, he acquires greater freedom to approach God, whom he adores and loves in spirit and in truth. Merely human efforts, the natural action of the will, and a purely philosophical conviction are not enough to enable a man to attain to this spirit of poverty, he must be impelled, led onward, and inspired by grace—that is to say, by the Holy Spirit. “For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. viii. 14). To be the son of God is to be born to happiness, to have it within one, as a kind of second life ; and from the moment that happiness is planted no longer without but within us, in

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our inmost being, it begins to penetrate yet more deeply, making its way through our sensations, feelings, and judgments, until at last it reaches the very centre of our personality, the soul itself, where our joy has its abode. If it can go still farther, and, substituting its life for ours, can pass beyond ourselves, it will carry us away, and transport us into that surpassing state of rapture which we call ecstasy.

Ancient philosophers with their marvelous discoveries and extraordinary acuteness, dimly perceived this ; it is faintly suggested in Socrates' "genius" and in the "inward God" of Marcus Aurelius ; but the Gospel has revealed it to all men, and the Holy Spirit bestows it in its fulness upon men of good will. *Regnum Dei intra vos est . . . Regnum Dei possidebunt.*

The joy that God gives, penetrates to the very soul, and is possessed by those who voluntarily embrace poverty. It is the treasure found by those who are poor for God's sake ; is the glory of the humble, who sought nothing in this world, neither money and the gratification of the senses, nor the

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highly valued applause of philosophers, for, keeping their eyes fixed on what lies beyond our human horizon, they have left behind them all their natural instincts, have risen above their pride, and, boldly passing all the barriers of the material world and of the created universe, they have entered the kingdom of God.

The intuition of the pagan philosophers on this point is wonderful ; we might almost fancy them to be commentators expounding the Gospel, so completely does the truth perceived by the sages of old agree with that taught to the faithful. Marcus Aurelius writes as follows :—" Men seek for themselves quiet retreats, country towns, the sea-coast, mountain solitudes—and you too are apt to yield to a keen desire for such advantages, yet in this you act as a foolish and ignorant man, since whenever you choose you can withdraw into yourself. Nowhere can a man find a more peaceful retreat, less liable to disturbance, than in his own soul, particularly if he possesses within him that which it instantly affords him perfect peace to contemplate." It seems almost incredible

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that the wise man who wrote these words had never heard these words: "The kingdom of God is within you."

And yet this wisdom is of too philosophical a nature to be accessible to the masses; for the common people and the poor need this teaching as much as any, and, never having had an opportunity to test for themselves the emptiness of riches, they are all the more liable to fall into disastrous errors in their opinion of them. Poverty will always be the lot of the majority of the human race; and if the poor are not to fall into despair, they need some striking and simple teaching to disprove their idea that happiness depends upon wealth. If a Master, whom all can hear and understand, proclaims that the fundamental condition of happiness lies in detachment from all material possessions, it at once becomes obvious that happiness is within the reach of rich and poor alike.

It may be that the rich are more enthralled by riches than the poor, but they have better opportunity for proving how utterly wealth fails to satisfy the soul. The cupidity of the poor may be intensified by the privations

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that they undergo, but if they resign themselves to their poverty, and love it, being actually poor, they have nothing more to do, and no visible sacrifice to make. Happiness due to poverty, becomes as natural to the rich, through their understanding, as it becomes easy to the poor, through their good will; the former understand it with less difficulty, the latter acquire it more easily.

II

The words of the first Beatitude, besides having a deep and definite meaning, admit of a certain extension, for they apply to an infinite number of human passions and circumstances. We need only think for a moment of the details of life and of the secrets of a soul that cares only for money, in order to gain some idea of the number, variety, and importance of the points of contact that may exist between the first Beatitude and our conduct and line of action. We cannot limit its applicability, and neither Bossuet nor any other genius could mark

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the line of the vast horizon which here presents itself. Happily for us, our Saviour Himself, in the course of the Sermon on the Mount, went on to expound His own teaching, and we have only to hear Him.

. . . "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth ; where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also. . . . No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or he will sustain the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

"Therefore I say to you : be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat, and the body more than the raiment ? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns ; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they ? And which

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of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? And for raiment why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they labour not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe; how much more you, O ye of little faith? Be not solicitous therefore, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.

“Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.

“Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow, for the morrow will be solicitous for itself.

“Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. vi. 19-21, 24-34).

This exquisite passage is not only a masterpiece of poetical expression and of fresh,

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delicate perception, but it is also a marvel of wisdom. No human genius desiring to formulate a philosophic code of ideal happiness, that should be sublime, attainable, and without alloy, has ever expressed himself in such graceful form as that, in which Jesus Christ explained His profound and beautiful doctrines. In order to appreciate the beauty, and to fathom the meaning of this discourse, we must reduce it to a few short propositions, dissecting it, and laying bare its philosophical groundwork.

The reader will have no difficulty in referring each of the following statements to the corresponding passage in the Sermon on the Mount.

The spirit of riches is bad for man, it harms him in every way, for it injures him and destroys his peace of mind. It often leads him to sin, and always makes him unhappy.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth.”

The spirit of riches gives rise to thoughts and fears, which affect and oppress man in proportion as he clings to the good things of

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this world. "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also."

Love of worldly goods deprives a man of all the joys that come from God, of the rapturous delights and of the consolations of piety and hope.

"No man can serve two masters. . . . You cannot serve God and mammon."

Very little suffices to feed and to clothe us, although both food and clothing are needful. Whatever goes beyond the limit of our actual needs is luxury, ostentation, or refinement; and these things cost much money, and drive men to acts of injustice, leading to disturbances and war, whilst they afford very slight satisfaction after all.

"Behold the birds of the air."

"Consider the lilies of the field."

As a man really requires very little to supply his needs, it is assuredly not worth his while to be anxious about the morrow.

"Be not solicitous therefore."

"Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

Man, being the son of God, has only to rest in the hand of his heavenly Father, with childlike confidence and free from un-Chris-

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tian anxiety, abandoning desires for the things of earth, seeking rather the kingdom of God, and making justice his sole ambition.

“Your Father knoweth that you have need.”

“Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God.”

What an ideal we have here, what a programme of peaceful, joyful, and sublime life !

Each of these propositions may profitably be examined closely and in detail.

III

“Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth.”

Our Saviour does not forbid us to make a fortune, but He forbids us to lay it up or to hoard it. The Gospel does not condemn the circulation of money, which encourages industry, supports trade, gives work to the labouring classes, makes great undertakings possible, and relieves the poor.

To denounce wealth that is in a state of

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activity and productiveness would be to sterilise social intercourse, to paralyse human enterprise, to check all progress, and to destroy one of the most wonderful elements of earthly happiness, which a man may lawfully and rightly enjoy. The Gospel denounces the abnormal and unnatural craving for money as an end in itself, which leads men first to seek it with too great eagerness, and then to hoard it, so that it produces nothing. If money is to be used in accordance with the laws laid down for its employment, and is to produce beneficial results, it must be like a calmly flowing stream, that fertilises the land in its even course, and it must not resemble either a furious torrent, a scourge causing terrible disasters, or a stagnant marsh, breeding pestilence and death.

We need not attempt to recall the sorrows and catastrophes that have originated in an excessive love of money. Our own age knows its evil results better, perhaps, than any other age has done, and they are the chief source of suffering both to individuals and to society. It may not, however, be unprofitable to point out the two fatal

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results of an insatiate desire for money. No one can fail to recognise the twofold evil when once it is plainly exposed to view.

The crime, committed by unscrupulous fortune hunters, is rendered particularly detestable by the fact that their victims are weak, defenceless, and unsuspicious men of lowly rank. This crime and its punishment proceed from the same cause. The lovers of gold are themselves, in their lives and in their consciences, under the weight of a terrible curse, which foreshadows a speedy vengeance. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the weak, whether they are the victims of the injustice of the strong or not, form at the present day a formidable class, conscious of its own force of resistance, which renders the vultures of society uneasy in the tenure of their precarious possessions.

Whether these vultures be great or small, they no longer have inaccessible eyries where they can quietly devour their prey. Their money is already being tracked and pursued by others. Servants, workmen, tradespeople, and business agents attack it at innumerable points, patiently renewing their

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assaults, like a swarm of insects that will not disperse, so long as a particle of flesh remains on a skeleton. And whilst the industrious ants are consuming the rich, the masses of the people roar and rage like some great wild beast confined in a cage, the bars of which are one by one being removed by fresh legislation. The possession of money is fraught with uneasiness, if not with anxious apprehension. As to the troubles of conscience which disturb the owners of wrongly acquired wealth, believers have good reason not to put faith in their cynical profession or affectation of an indifference that they do not really feel. Unbelievers, though they may not think much about it, can see that sometimes a thief suffers a loss greater than the man whom he has robbed. The latter only loses the enjoyment of his money, but the thief loses all self-satisfaction in his inner life, where he should find joy and consolation.

When we think how many rich men have acquired their wealth by foul means, we can hardly fail to conceive a kind of dislike of riches, and to feel less and less inclined to envy the possessors of them or to covet

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them for ourselves. St Jerome declares that every rich man is either unjust in his dealings, or the heir of one who was unjust. The words may have been true in St Jerome's time, when society was still pagan, but they would appear exaggerated if applied to the world as we know it. We cannot, however, refuse to believe words inspired by the Holy Spirit. St Paul says that "they that will become rich, fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil . . . for the desire of money is the root of all evils" (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10); and elsewhere we read: "He that loveth gold shall not be justified" (Ecclus. xxxi. 5); and though many have sinned through poverty, no man can seek to be enriched without falling into evil.

One of the most highly esteemed pagan philosophers had already declared that, whoever loves money cannot act aright, either in ruling others or in his private life. It would be a mistake to assume that in these statements reference is made only to thieves, plunderers, and swindlers. We are apt to ignore the fact that Holy Scripture contains a number of disquieting allusions to banking,

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speculation, and trade. For instance, we read in Ecclesiasticus (xxvii. 2): "As a stake sticketh fast in the midst of the joining of stones, so also in the midst of selling and buying, sin shall stick fast." Not that trade is in itself an evil, but there is an insidious danger in the art of taking advantage of another's needs or desires. Trade exposes a man to many temptations, to falsehood: "It is naught, it is naught, saith every buyer: and when he is gone away, then will he boast" (Prov. xx. 14). "He that gathereth treasures by a lying tongue, is vain and foolish" (Prov. xxi. 6). What shall we say of the falsehoods by which men overreach and deceive one another? What of the great speculations by which vast fortunes are acquired? "He that hideth up corn shall be cursed among the people, but a blessing upon the head of them that sell" (Prov. xi. 26). Would not a modern speculator, well endowed with commercial ability, be inclined to consider the former to be a shrewd and clever man and the latter to be one who did not know his business? And what kind of business man

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would he be, who deserves the blessing rather than the curse proclaimed in the above-quoted passage of Holy Scripture? This is equivalent to asking what merchant merits the benediction, rather than the curse, expressed in the above passage of Holy Writ. Perhaps this is the reason why, wherever Jesus met with money changers or dealers, He either induced them to leave all to follow Him, or He overthrew their tables, and scourged the men themselves. At the time when our Lord acted thus, the Essenians, who claimed to practise greater virtue than the rest of the Jews, abstained from all business, alleging that trade involved a desire to injure one's neighbour. The Essenians lived, it is true, in the midst of Jews; and in our day no one has a greater natural aptitude for trade than a Jew, but, perhaps, no one naturally displays such Jewish characteristics as a trader. All alike belong to the people of Israel, of whom God says that "her rich men are filled with iniquity and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth" (Mich. vi. 12).

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Honest traders suffer too much from untrustworthy speculators to feel any indignation, if the inspired words of Holy Scripture proclaim such stern truths.

Cupidity, as displayed in the unrestrained desire for the acquisition of worldly goods, is a great evil, and no one altogether escapes the suffering which results from it, although he may not realise its magnitude.

The evils due to the hoarding up of wealth are less apparent, but no less terrible, and a miser wrongs his fellow-men and secretly tortures himself. As far as he can, he stops the circulation of money, and so hinders its beneficial action, and deprives some portion of the human race of the means necessary for existence. When a whole family commits suicide in consequence of having fallen into abject poverty, somewhere or other may be found the misers, who have brought about this misery and are answerable for the crime, for they have, as it were, blocked up every chink through which air might have reached those who were dying of suffocation. In checking the flow of money they check the tide of life, and those who

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need it, seek it in vain, for the stream has dried up. The poor weep and lament, and finally die, because misers are hoarding up wealth. The fact is undeniable : there is money enough and there is food enough in the world to support three times the number of its present inhabitants. The earth produces dainty fruits to delight the rich, and roots and corn to satisfy the poor, and both in sufficient abundance ; and if there are still unhappy creatures, ragged and starving, tortured by cold and hunger, whilst no one comes to their aid, the fault too often lies with the miserly rich, who will neither spend nor give away their money. “ The bread of the needy is the life of the poor ; he that defraudeth them thereof is a man of blood ” (Ecclus. xxxiv. 25).

However, the miser punishes himself, for gold is not only a hard master, but it inflicts torture. The miser clings to it, is as firmly attached to it, as Prometheus was to the rock, and his covetousness gnaws at his vitals. Moments of freedom from anxiety and of satisfaction come to him far less often than to a poor man, who welcomes every

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windfall. A poor man who loves God, would certainly not exchange the treasure of peace and joy that he bears hidden in his heart for all the miser's wealth.

A poor man who lives without God may seem to be a more pitiable object than a miser, but there is not much difference between them when they think of death, or when they meet and look at one another.

All the facts, that we have thus briefly reviewed, are so obvious as to need neither comments nor proof. Almost every book of Holy Scripture proclaims them emphatically, giving a vigorous interpretation to the Master's gentle words in the Beatitudes.

Moses gave the Hebrews a wonderful code, embodying unselfishness, justice, and liberality. He commanded landowners to leave something in their cornfields and vineyards for the poor and the wayfarers. He forbade theft, lying, fraud, and injustice. "Thou shalt not calumniate thy neighbour nor oppress him by violence. The wages of him that hath been hired by thee shall not abide with thee until the morning" (Lev. xix. 13). With regard to a pledge given by a poor

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man, he decreed : “ Thou shalt restore it to him presently before the going down of the sun, that he may sleep in his own raiment and bless thee, and thou mayst have justice before the Lord thy God. . . . Thou shalt pay him the price of his labour the same day, before the going down of the sun, because he is poor and with it maintaineth his life : lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be reputed to thee for a sin ” (Deut. xxiv. 12, 13, 15).

The great legislator enjoined generosity even towards animals, and forbade the Jews to muzzle the oxen when they were treading out the corn.

Not only in the books of Moses, but also in those of Wisdom, in the Psalms, and in the prophets, do we find denunciation of the rich, and blessing of those whose hearts do not cling to money. David declares, in almost the same words as our Saviour, that the unjust rich have their reward in this life—a terrible misfortune when we think of the life to come. We read in Ecclesiasticus that gold and silver have destroyed many, and that there is not a more wicked thing than

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to love money. Only the deepest iniquity could justify the strong language used by Isaias (v. 8): "Wo to you that join house to house, and lay field to field, even to the end of the place: shall you alone dwell in the midst of the earth?" Jeremias exclaimed (xxii. 13, 17): "Wo to him that buildeth up his house by injustice . . . who saith: 'I will build me a wide house and large chambers': who openeth to himself windows, and maketh roofs of cedar and painteth them with vermillion. . . . Thy eyes and thy heart are set upon covetousness, and upon shedding innocent blood, and upon oppression, and running after evil works."

These and similar words are not to be regarded as mere Jewish exaggerations, or as threats of the purely supernatural order.

St James, the Apostle, echoes these invectives of the Old Testament, and other divinely inspired writers, both before and after him, agree in making it perfectly plain that the threats of the prophets refer to sufferings to be undergone in this world, and to temporal punishment proceeding from the very nature of things.

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No denunciation could be more emphatic and vigorous than that of St James (v. 1-4): "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last days. Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth; and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." It is scarcely possible to understand this solely of punishment in the world to come; and St Paul seems to decide the question when he writes: "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content. For they that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root of all evils, which some coveting have erred from the faith,

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and have entangled themselves in many sorrows" (1 Tim. vi. 8-10).

When in the Apocalypse St John wrote : " Alas, alas that great city wherein all were made rich," he not only gave utterance to a prophecy, but he stated a fact worthy of the consideration of a deep thinker and philosopher.

Why should men labour and do evil to obtain what is after all a scourge ?

The rich man, who has toiled in gathering riches together, finds that they are but vanity and deceitfulness ; and yet this pitiable return is all that he has for his labour, and to this our Lord referred when He said : " Wo to you that are rich, for you have your consolation."

Philosophers and Christians agree in declaring that, if it be a crime to acquire money wrongfully and to hoard it meanly, it is a crime that money itself punishes.

IV

We must now return to the principles laid down by philosophy. We know that ex-

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ternal things affect us only in proportion as we give them a hold upon us. In themselves they do not touch us and we are indifferent to them, or if they assail us, it is that they may inflict suffering upon us, and may consume and destroy us. They are capable of afflicting us only in as far as we expose our hearts to them as their prey. This is why money will never bring misery upon the man who does not love it, but who uses it with the indifference which it deserves, as being a convenient and powerful means to an end.

A man ought to be thoroughly convinced that if he makes himself the slave of wealth, acquired or expected, he exposes himself not only to innumerable annoyances, but also to troubles that will affect him, more keenly just because he has set his heart upon money. Hoarded treasure, capital too eagerly amassed and protected, as far from being gold mines to their owner, are mines rather of cares, anxiety, enmity, disputes, envy, sleeplessness, and wrath, simply because he is passionately striving to gain and to keep, what others no less passionately are

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seeking to retain or to destroy. The rust which eats away the metal or the thieves who steal it, cause it no suffering, for it has no sensation, but if a man has set all his hopes and joys upon that metal, then the rust eats into his flesh and the thieves rob him of his very vitals. In plainer words, we may say that the man who has for money only a slight affection, mingled with contempt, will enjoy its advantages as much as anyone, without suffering from the anxieties and cares to which it gives rise. He, on the contrary, who is so wedded to his money, and loves it so dearly, that he has identified himself with it, never really enjoys any of the good things that it can purchase, for buying anything means parting with his money. Moreover, he will suffer the agony of owning that, which is at once the most precarious and most disputed of all possessions.

If he buys anything, or spends money on amusement, he enjoys neither, for they are poisoned by the thought of what they have cost. If he refuses to spend his money he keeps it, but it is rendered bitter by the

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thought that he is living deprived of all that is desirable, and he does it merely to save a sum that may depreciate in value to-morrow, or to keep up his capital, of which thieves, swindlers, or death will certainly rob him sooner or later. The man who makes a rational use of money, who regards it as a means and not as an end, when he considers whether he will spend it or not, chooses between two forms of gratification. The miser has to choose between two forms of sacrifice. The former exchanges a piece of property that he values little, for something which he desires or in which he is interested, and he profits thereby; the latter can only make up his mind to purchase anything when he is constrained by absolute necessity, and then he feels as if he were paying away his life-blood. From his point of view his purchase is a surgical operation, an amputation rather than an acquisition; and we may well say that a miser is the most wretched of beggars, inasmuch as he refuses to give alms even to himself.

The miser expects to derive a twofold satisfaction from his hoarded gold. The

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mere fact of possession, in itself and for its own sake, gives him pleasure, and he can look forward to the future calmly, with no anxiety as to the necessities of life. The first kind of satisfaction, however, is so completely contrary to nature as to be worthy only of a madman. Gold in itself, deserves love far less than Pygmalion's statue; for it was at least beautiful, although this fact does not prevent Pygmalion from being classed with other famous men of disordered intellect. The second kind is exposed to the risk of destruction by any calamity, for, in spite of the greatest precautions, it is always possible for money to be lost. Bossuet expresses this in the following terms:—"Every sensible man assigns to himself some place of refuge, which he regards as a harbour, where he can take shelter when driven by contrary winds. But the refuge that you are preparing for yourself against reverses of fortune, is still subject to them, and however prudent you may be, you will never forestall all fortune's caprices. You may think that you are well armed on one side, but ruin will come from another quarter ;

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you may have secured your building with fortifications round about it, and suddenly its foundations will give way, or if they are firm, a thunderbolt will overthrow it."

No one realises the risk of loss so well as the miser, whose heart flutters like a dry leaf in the wind at the least suggestion of danger, and even if no such suggestion comes to disturb his peace it is, nevertheless, embittered by the certainty of death sooner or later; and as death draws near, he sees how pitiable he has been duped, for he has undergone untold privations throughout his life, simply in order to leave wealth which his heirs will gaily squander, whilst they ridicule him and condemn his vice.

Holy Scripture does not spare the miserly even from this point of view, although this is by no means the chief part of their punishment, since it only partially affects their temporal happiness. The special folly which leads them to forego all the advantages which money can procure for the sake of money itself, is stigmatised by king Solomon, who of all the sacred writers, shows the most profound knowledge of earthly pos-

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sessions and their value. He says (Eccles. vi. 2, 3, 6): "A man to whom God hath given riches and substance and honour, and his soul wanteth nothing of all that he desireth, yet God doth not give him power to eat thereof, but a stranger shall eat it up. This is vanity and a great misery. . . . Of this man I pronounce that the untimely born is better than he . . . although he lived two thousand years, he hath not enjoyed good things." And elsewhere the wise king says that the miser is evil to himself and envieth himself, that his eye is wicked, and that he despiseth his own soul, being needy and pensive at his own table.

His troubles too are described. "Watching for riches consumeth the flesh, and the thought thereof driveth away sleep. The thinking beforehand turneth away the understanding" (Ecclus. xxxi. 1, 2). So far is he from deriving comfort from his possessions, that he dwells only upon the possible dangers of the future. He brings down upon himself the curse uttered by the prophet: "Wo to him that gathereth together an evil covetousness to his house, that his nest may

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be on high, and thinketh he may be delivered out of the hand of evil " (Hab. ii. 9).

A miser lives in constant dread of thieves and is tortured by every prediction of ruin. He regards his heirs with no less horror than the worms which will consume his flesh; he regards them, in fact, with even greater abhorrence, for the worms will after all attack only his body, whilst his heirs will gloat over the gold that is his very soul. The thought of death, that will strip him of all his property, makes him shudder with that fear, which is described in such terribly realistic language in the book of Job (xx. 15): "The riches which he hath swallowed he shall vomit up, and God shall draw them out of his belly."

V

If the material results of avarice are repulsive, they are as nothing in comparison with the loss of all moral and supernatural joys, which the soul suffers, as soon as it allows itself to be ensnared by riches. The unhappy

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wretch who is enslaved to money loses all rapturous delights, all the happiness of serving God, and all the sustaining consolations proceeding from a hope in the life to come. His avarice weighs him down so that he can no longer lift his head. Our Saviour, after reminding us that where our treasure is, there is our heart also, went on to declare that no man can serve two masters—that is to say, no man can have two ideals, touch at the same time what is infinite and what is nothing, plunge into the fulness of light, and at the same time wallow in the mire of this base world. This incompatibility between what is high and what is degraded, serves to increase the temporal misery of the avaricious. They can aim at nothing exalted. Their vulgarity has been so plainly pointed out by comic writers and by satirists that we need not dwell upon it. Not that it is by any means impossible for a Chicago pork butcher to have a refined mind, but there are certain modes of life which preclude certain conditions of the soul. When we see the slave Plautus working at his wheel, and Epictetus digging his

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garden, we do not feel that their daily toil interfered with their intellectual activity. Yet we cannot imagine Plato selling candles or Pythagoras growing rich by trade in the products of the East, whilst he was studying Oriental books.

Seneca expresses the difference in a phrase that is undoubtedly exaggerated, but yet very much to the point, when he asks whether a noble sentiment has ever been known to originate in a shop. The special punishment inflicted upon grasping shopkeepers and lucky Philistines, who have more money than a hundred asses could carry, is very frequently the deadening of their intellect under the burden of their wealth. Souls capable of rising to higher things find in poverty a kind of release from bondage, enabling them to soar to regions flooded with light. There is nothing finer in ancient literature than what Antisthenes says regarding the lessons taught him by his master, Socrates: "Above all other advantages do I value the liberty and leisure which allow me constantly to hear and see that which is best worth hearing and seeing,

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and to spend my whole time with Socrates. I, who have not a penny, and who could never supply Autolycus with oil for rubbing his body before a wrestling bout, can, thanks to Socrates, boast of my wealth. Without ever reckoning up an account against me, he has conferred upon me priceless benefits—namely, those mental riches which I now so gladly share with my friends.”

Herodotus tells us of a certain Onesillus, who, having been taken prisoner, and beheaded, by the people of Amathus, his head was hung up over the city gate. No sooner had it decayed so that nothing was left but the skull, than a swarm of bees began to store their honey in it. This story might easily be developed into a curious and suggestive allegory.

Without, however, going back to Herodotus, we may still often find poverty, like a spider, spinning its web in the garrets where the Muses devise their choicest products. The workers are the poets nowadays ; and the great men, the devotees of science and progress, are invariably the most unselfish. The art which beautifies the

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world, the joy which gives it brightness, the strength and goodness which impart to it life and warmth—all these seem to belong peculiarly to those that are poor in spirit, whose hearts, not clinging to earthly things, thus appear to be filled with good will. But, on the other hand, men who live only in order to scrape money together, reveal their true nature in those characteristic roars which are only to be heard on the Stock Exchange, and at the Zoological Gardens when the wild beasts are fed.

David would have spoken poetically as well as prophetically, had he applied to speculators the words: "Let their eyes be darkened that they see not, and their back be bent down always." Such men do not know how to look up—but "let the poor see and rejoice, seek God and your soul shall live."

Science, art, sanctity, and wisdom are gifts in comparison with which, as the Holy Spirit tells us, gold is as sand, and silver as clay.

Whatever be a man's ideal, the fact that he has one, is enough to make him a member

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of an aristocracy that the worshippers of Plutus would not envy. Swine do not soar on wings, nor do swallows wallow in mire. Whatever joy belongs to a life spent in light, fancies, and noble ambitions, it cannot be perceived by those who worship the golden calf, and sometimes, in consequence of their desire for its gold, acquire its stupidity.

The Gospel, as usually translated, teaches us that every man who identifies himself with his money and grows bloated with wealth is like a camel, to which every outlet into a higher life is as a needle's eye. A man with hands and feet clogged with mud, is out of place in marble halls and in the temples of God and the Muses ; in fact, he has no desire to enter places whither those less encumbered with worldly delights, are eager to penetrate, and this want of interest in and aptitude for all the nobler pleasures and consolations of life here below, is in itself a true misfortune.

If a soul, that has transformed itself into an iron safe, is scarcely capable of rising to any height above our purely natural horizon, it is still more difficult for it to reach those

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lofty regions where we may commune familiarly with God. Piety is of too subtle and exalted a nature to ally itself with coarse and violent cupidity. If we may be sure that delicacy of feeling will be missing in one who reduces everything to its money equivalent, and judges every man by his balance at the bank, still less can we expect to find in him that most impalpable and refined delicacy—viz. that which proceeds from frequent intercourse with God.

But there is something more than mere incompatibility between avarice and the service of God—there is a positive antagonism and declared hostility. With profound truth and accuracy St Paul defines covetousness as the service of idols.

Gold and silver are the object of true and real adoration, not of any merely fanciful, intermittent, or purely ceremonial worship. A Christian who would do for God's sake all that a covetous man would do for the sake of money, would be a truly great saint. Money cuts men off from God in conscience, will, and soul. Sensual pleasure carries away only the young and the degraded, ambition

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only the restless, hatred only those whose hearts are embittered and evil, and, as a rule, these vices lead men away from God only for a time. Wickedness originating in covetousness, however, affects men of all ages, and on all occasions leads them far astray. Sometimes the temptation comes through the body, which suggests the need of money to satisfy hunger; sometimes it comes through the senses, which crave for costly pleasures; sometimes through the brain, which regards riches as forming the most universally recognised justification for pride. Love of money makes itself felt at every period of life: at the age which squanders and at the age which hoards; at the prime of life, when the harvest is gathered in, and at its decline, when prudent calculations are made. Love of gold is suggested by the golden blossoms with which spring decks the meadows, by the golden corn ripening in the summer, by the golden products of autumn, and by the calculations made in winter, when the profits are reckoned up and the stores surveyed. "You that have forsaken the Lord," exclaims Isaias (lxv. 11,

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12), "that have forgotten my holy mount, that set a table for fortune and offer libations upon it ; I will number you in the sword and you shall all fall by slaughter, because I called, and you did not answer ; I spoke, and you did not hear."

The history, recorded by St Matthew, of the young man who desired to follow Jesus Christ in the way of perfection, but abandoned that highest of all vocations because he had great possessions, teaches us to be on our guard. St Paul tells us that he shed tears over those who, through minding earthly things, became enemies of the cross of Christ ; and in another epistle, after saying that the desire of money is the root of all evils, he continues : " But thou, O man of God, fly these things, and pursue justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness, and fight the good fight of faith " (1 Tim. vi. 11, 12). That is to say, far from yielding to the desire of money, rise to something higher, for no one can be truly the disciple of Christ who does not aim at perfection. The human heart is too small to love both God and Mammon, as either

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would suffice to engage all its affections, or, as Isaias puts it in homely language: "The bed is straitened, so that one must fall out, and a short covering cannot cover both" (xxviii. 20).

St Paul speaks in one place of the misery of such as are without Christ, aliens, strangers, having no hope of the promise, and without God in this world. Such is the lot of men enslaved to money; they have no hope; its life-giving sap is not within them, nor is its blossom before their eyes; and the more we reflect upon it, the more convinced we become of the magnitude of this loss inflicted especially upon the slaves of Mammon as their peculiar punishment.

They have no share in that sublime and undying hope which rises superior to all possible disasters, and supplies consolation when all else fails to do so. They are buried in a mine—a gold mine, perhaps, but still one whence they cannot see the sky. They are like the wicked described by Job, who says of them that they dig for a treasure and rejoice exceedingly when they have found a grave. No fact is stated more

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plainly and forcibly in the Bible than the exclusion of worshippers of money from eternal happiness. Hope seems to belong exclusively to the poor, to those in actual poverty, and to the poor in spirit. They possess the kingdom of Heaven, which can hardly be entered by the slaves of riches, who have their reward elsewhere.

One of the best-known parables in the Gospels teaches us that whatever attaches a man to this world, is in truth like fetters, which hinder him from advancing towards this hope of eternity. One day, we are told, one of those that sat at table with our Lord exclaimed: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Our Saviour in reply uttered the parable of the certain man who made a great supper. Supper is the evening meal, taken leisurely after sunset, and it typifies death—"and he invited many." If the poor and the sorrowful and those who hunger and thirst, and the persecuted, are the invited guests, surely the majority of the human race is bidden to partake of the feast. "And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them

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that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready." Since the coming of the Messiah and the preaching of the Gospel all is, indeed, ready for all who desire to be saved. Nothing is wanting ; we have the truth and grace ; instruction has been given and the means of salvation offered to us. " They began all at once to make excuse." The first had bought a farm, and naturally he desired to go thither and nowhere else. Whosoever has (to use St Paul's expression) a lasting city in this world need not trouble himself to seek one that is to come. The second had bought five yoke of oxen. His excuse was still better ; a very important matter—viz. his business—was concerned, and a man with five yoke of oxen to try, troubles little about the kingdom of Heaven. The third had married a wife ; and he was still more occupied than the others, for his heart was no longer free, and God Himself ordered a man to leave father and mother and to cleave to his wife. How much more will such a man gladly forego the supper ?

In fact, all the excuses are as good and as

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legitimate as possible, and this is the worst point about them. To arrive punctually and to sit down at God's table is infinitely harder for those whose thoughts are pre-occupied, whose business is engrossing, whose affections are engaged, than it is for those who possess neither house, nor oxen, nor wife.

The rest of the parable bears witness to this truth. None of those who were invited was willing to leave his goods. Then the servants were sent out to invite those who had none. None would choose voluntary poverty, therefore those actually poor took their place. Good fortune may detain some, but misfortune urges others on and compels them to come in. "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and the feeble and the blind and the lame." And as there was still room, that the house might be furnished with guests, the master sent out into the highways and hedges—he sent, as we should say, to fetch the outsiders from the streets and to bring them in by force. Heaven must not be left empty, and none of those men who were invited should taste of the supper.

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Is not this parable, with its vigorous wording, calculated to alarm us? We might even say that it would cause the majority of men to despair if, on the one hand, the invitation given did not probably symbolise some grace of election, some call to a higher vocation, and if, on the other hand, old age, sickness, and death did not reduce most of us to that state of compulsory poverty which renders the human soul more fit to partake of the eternal banquet.

The spirit of riches deprives men not only of the hope of everlasting happiness in the world to come, but also of the many little pleasures that can be enjoyed in this life. The advantages of wealth are so deceptive that its possession affords but little satisfaction. They exist in anticipation, so that we enjoy them whilst we look forward to them, rather than when we have acquired riches. Even in trivial matters hope buoys up the human heart, rouses its courage, urges it to action, and consequently gives it a kind of fallacious promise of happiness. For a sum of money that a rich man would regard as nothing, a poor man will work steadily

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all day long. A meal that a rich man would think unfit to eat, is a feast to which a poor man will look forward for weeks. They take totally different views of the world and of life in general. They resemble two men seated at the same table, of whom one has a good appetite for his food, the other, being dyspeptic, rejects it with disgust. Or again, they may be compared with two travellers following the same route—one of whom, as twilight approaches, keeps his eyes fixed on the landscape, that is still lighted up by the sun's rays, whilst the other looks at what is already shrouded in darkness. Everything is a pleasure to those who possess nothing, whilst nothing can stir the enthusiasm of those who, having all things, have learnt that none of them afford satisfaction. This is probably the meaning of the words: "One is as it were rich, when he hath nothing; and another is as it were poor, when he hath great riches" (Prov. xiii. 7); and St Paul may have recalled this text when, in speaking of the poverty of the early Christians, he said that men believed them to be sorrowful, yet they were always rejoicing; to be needy,

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yet they enriched many ; to have nothing, whereas they possessed all things.

These words seem to be almost as applicable to the natural order as they are to the supernatural.

The second chapter of Ecclesiastes is so well known that it need not be quoted. In it, the Preacher describes his return with sorrow and disappointment from his quest of pleasure. He was not a poor prophet, preaching in the open air to a crowd of persons no better off than himself : he was, on the contrary, the richest of kings, who denied himself nothing — neither gorgeous sights nor the gratification of his senses ; his palaces and gardens were marvels of beauty ; he possessed the highest intellectual powers, and was famous as a wise man who excelled other noted sages of the East. Nevertheless, his words are, perhaps, the most eloquent commentary upon the first Beatitude, for they bear witness to the misery of those who expect earthly advantages to supply them with that positive happiness for which the human heart craves. If we disregard those reckless and foolish persons

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who are scarcely responsible, and are so prejudiced as not to be trustworthy, we may boldly assert that every reasonable rich man would agree with Ecclesiastes if he took the trouble to consider the matter.

"Set your hearts to consider your ways," says the prophet Aggeus (i. 5, 6). "You have sowed much, and brought in little; you have eaten, but have not had enough; you have drunk, but have not been filled with drink; you have clothed yourselves, but have not been warmed; and he that hath earned wages put them into a bag with holes." Underlying all these illustrations is the psychological and moral truth, which the prophet states shortly thus: "You have looked for more, and behold it became less."¹

Many, perhaps, will think that although money may not afford all the gratification

¹ Whilst dealing with this subject we cannot forbear making a few extracts from a letter written by a man who possessed about 8,000,000 sterling. "... If it is a happiness to have an excellent cook, first-rate wines in one's cellar, to live in one of the finest houses on the Champs Elysées, and to own a magnificent castle on the banks of the Loire, I cannot deny that all these sources of happiness have fallen to my

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that they expect, and although the possession of wealth may destroy the pleasing illusions enjoyed by those who have nothing, still the

lot ; but as I have never had to eat an eighteen-penny dinner nor to drink bad wine, nor to live in a garret, I have had no chance of appreciating all the advantages of my position, although they may be very real.

"I am inclined to think that the greatest pleasure enjoyed by speculators like myself are those that are the result of our vanity.

"So much for the pleasures—but as for the worries, I should never get to the end if I tried to make a list of them. In the first place, there is what I may call the bother of being bored. I am very subject to it, and whenever I am alone, *tête-à-tête* with myself, it attacks me, though I am not much better off in society ; and you can guess the reason. I almost always meet tiresome people, and they tire me. . . .

"A hundredth part of my income would enable me to live without work, and yet my business and my amusements occupy me so fully that I never can go to bed before midnight, and then I am dead tired. . . .

"Wealth bestows on him who is burdened with it only one way of being happy—viz. he has it in his power to make others happy—but (there is always a 'but,') he may be sure that he is at the same time making them ungrateful. . . . I have reserved to the end the greatest of all my sufferings. I am naturally disposed to love others, but I have never been able to believe in the disinterested affection of anyone, and this has made me gloomy, if not misanthropic. I have suffered greatly in consequence. The person whom, after my mother, I loved best in the world, loved me merely on account of the money that I spent upon her, and so I have never married, being afraid lest I should be accepted as a husband, as I had been loved, for the sake of my money. Therefore I am a bachelor of forty-six, with an income of a quarter of a million."

The American, Cornelius Vanderbilt, who died

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fact of having property averts anxieties concerning the future, and affords protection from what, after actual hunger, is the most painful feature of poverty. As far as the poor are concerned, our divine Master in His Sermon on the Mount forestalled this objection, and we shall see very soon the remedy that He devised for the cares of the needy. As for the rich, long before the Gospel revelation, the Holy Spirit disclosed to those who knew them not by experience, the dull and ceaseless anxieties which torture hearts that are the slaves of wealth. Hope is not only lost, but its place is taken by a kind of preoccupation, an inevitable disturbance of mind aroused by every glance into the future.

“O Death,” cries the Sage, “how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that

not long ago, leaving a fortune of 100,000,000 sterling, was forced to work twelve hours daily at the management of his thirty or forty lines of railway; therefore the 100,000 men whom he employed had more free time than he had. Moreover, he was not happy in his family, having been obliged to disinherit one of his two sons.

Well may the Holy Spirit counsel us to beware of envying princely banquets in which is the bread of deceit.

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hath peace in his possessions ! ” (Ecclus. xli. 1). The prophet Baruch says : “ Where are the princes of the nations . . . that hoard up silver and gold, wherein men trust, and there is no end of their getting ? who work in silver and are solicitous ? . . . They are cut off, and are gone down to hell.”

Like Job, the rich man knows that when he shall sleep he shall take nothing with him ; he shall open his eyes, and find nothing. The thought of the future forces the wealthy man to choose between two painful alternatives. If he says : “ Rather than work for the welfare of others I will enjoy my money, and spend it upon myself,” the briefest reflection will suggest to him to remember poverty in the time of abundance, and the necessities of poverty in the day of riches : “ From the morning until the evening the time shall be changed . . . and a wise man will fear in everything.” If, on the contrary, he determines to abandon reckless enjoyment to-day, in order to keep his fortune safe for to-morrow, the same spirit of wisdom will remind him that riches are not comely for a covetous man and a niggard—and what

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should an envious man do with gold ? “ He that gathereth together by wronging his own soul, gathereth for others, and another will squander away his goods in rioting.”

If he decides to take a middle course, and by means of hard work and economy to secure for himself means to enjoy his carefully invested money when old age comes upon him, he will still be rendered anxious and uneasy by the cruel irony which seems inherent in everything belonging to this world.

“ There is one that is enriched by living sparingly, and this is the portion of his reward ; in that he saith : ‘ I have found me rest, and now I will eat of my goods alone,’ and he knoweth not what time shall pass and that death approacheth, and that he must leave all to others, and shall die ” (Ecclus. xi. 18-20). The words “ he knoweth not ” are merely a phrase : all who live sparingly know it well enough, and the prospect of death torments them. And if they did not know it, and were like the rich man of the parable, whose barns were full, and who had much goods laid up for many years, then their plight would be still more pitiable, for their

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eternal misery would be all the more probable.

The noblest of the pagans perceived the serenity and dignity which detachment from worldly goods produces in face of death. Socrates declared that to disencumber oneself from earthly possessions was to prepare for death, and at his last day he showed how greatly he had gained by having freed himself from all that could lead vulgar minds astray.

Antisthenes, one of the greatest of his followers, being asked what was the happiest thing that could befall a man, replied : " To die contented." When the questioner went on to ask how contentment in death might be attained, Antisthenes answered : " By living a life detached from material things."

VI

We can now understand why our Saviour seems to desire above all things to lead His disciples to a holy indifference as to the necessities of life. He wishes peace to reign

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in their hearts as well as in their consciences, and when He proceeds to inculcate that tranquillity of soul which is an essential condition of all happiness in this world, in order to make His words more persuasive, He adopts a style of exquisite poetical beauty. "I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body what you shall put on . . . behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they ? And which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit ? And for raiment why are you solicitous ? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow . . . and if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe ; how much more you, O ye of little faith ? "

How little we really need in order to sustain life, even a happy life ! If from all the things to which we are accustomed, we were to learn to do without, first, all that are plainly superfluous, then all that prejudice or habit renders apparently, but not really, necessary,

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we should soon be forced to confess that if most of the pleasures of this world are matters of fancy, most of its miseries are equally imaginary. What an absurdly small sum would cover the daily outlay of Diogenes ? What would be the money value of the clothes worn by St Francis of Assisi ?

Cardinal d'Astros, when he was imprisoned at Vincennes, had for his daily fare some coarse bread and a jugful of water, whilst his furniture consisted of a table, a stool, and a plank bed, and he was astonished to find that he was no less happy there than in his own palace. "Never could I have believed," he said, "that one's necessities might be reduced to so little !" If he had thought about the cloak worn by Crates, the rug or skin upon which Marcus Aurelius slept, and the frugal fare of Epicurus, he might have learnt more from these things than from the study of the philosopher's maxims.

Economists who examine the condition of the working classes are never weary of insisting upon the fact, that the latter might be abundantly provided with necessities if

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they would refrain from wasting their money on superfluous and even harmful luxuries. Many people are starving in our large towns because they have foolishly left the country districts where almost everyone can contrive to get a living. Others might rid themselves at once from a crushing burden of anxiety if, ceasing to aspire to a station in life that is beyond their means, they would be contented with something more modest. It is not bread that runs away with money, but the attempt to satisfy imaginary needs and the display demanded by pride. It is not living quietly in the place where Providence seems to have put us, that causes our suffering, it is that we have wandered into a position which we are unable to maintain. A little bread and cheese made a dainty feast for Epicurus ; would he have profited by exchanging his simple tastes for the extravagance of Lucullus ?

The shepherd on the Alps is warm enough in his homespun ; would he be better off if he suddenly determined to order his clothes of a fashionable tailor ?

Whenever Socrates crossed the market-

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place in Athens, and saw the various shops, he used to say : “ See what a number of things there are that I do not want ! ” If we consider how many things in daily use at the present time are not merely unnecessary, but foolish, we shall have a higher opinion than ever of Socrates’ wisdom.

Men, who work like galley slaves and cannot sleep for worry, whenever a bill falls due, who pay an absurd price for imaginary artificial amusements and gratifications ; those who ruin themselves by living beyond their means, who involve themselves in cares and have recourse to all manner of devices in order to throw dust in their neighbours’ eyes—all these lose sight of that true and philosophical principle which our Saviour expressed in the words : “ Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment ? ” They bring disturbing elements into their lives, and wear out and disfigure their bodies, that they may appear to be better fed and clad than their neighbours. Such is the confusion of the ideas, and so absolutely wrong are the arguments, of the majority, that we have come to describe as a gay

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fellow, or as a boon companion, a man who has surrendered his soul to tortures, his days to slavery, his body to sickness, and his savings to the most shameless panderers to the vanity or passions of mankind ; in fact, one who has soured, compromised, and shortened his life, as far as in him lies, without ever having succeeded in attaining to what was out of his reach.

So true is it that the problem of happiness finds its solution in simplicity of life, that the pagan philosophers are in perfect agreement with Holy Scripture on this point. In all his philosophy, Horace teaches moderation, and this principle is expressed in many lines of his, which have become proverbial. Other ancient writers have left us many striking remarks on the advantages of poverty, detachment, and restraint of immoderate desires.

Crates one day melted down his silver, and threw it into the sea, exclaiming : “ Begone, evil desires ! I drown you that you may not drown me ” ; and his biographers declare that thenceforth his cheerfulness never failed him.

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“Tell me what you want, and you shall have it,” said Alexander to Diogenes; and the latter replied: “O Alexander, who is the poorer—I, who want nothing but my cloak and wallet, or you, whose ambition the whole world is not vast enough to satisfy?” Plutarch tells us that Alexander was deeply distressed when Anaxarchus declared that thousands of other worlds existed, and said that he might well weep, on learning of their existence, since he had not yet been able to render himself sole master of one.

Although such a statement savours too much of madness to be accepted as historically true, nevertheless the very fact of its being recorded, and the existence of sayings of a similar nature reveal the philosopher’s opinion of such sentiments.

Diogenes taught that a wise man resembled the gods, for he who knew how to dispense with all things became like those who had need of nothing. Epictetus seems to have had this saying of Diogenes in his mind when he wrote the following counsel, which is one of the finest expressions of Stoicism: —“Remember to act throughout thy life as

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thou wouldst behave at a feast. When the dish that is being handed round is offered to thee, stretch forth thy hand, and take thereof with discretion. If it is carried beyond thee, seek not to retain it ; if it has not yet reached thee, be not impatient to forestall it in thy desires, but wait until it come to thee. Act likewise with regard to wife, children, public business, and money, and thou wilt be worthy to sit down at the table of the gods. But if thou takest nothing and despisest the things that are offered thee, thou wilt be not only the guest of the gods, but their colleague."

Ipsorum est regnum cælorum.

The agreement between pagan philosophy and inspired wisdom is perfect.

The Wise Man in the Book of Proverbs prays : " Give me neither beggary nor riches, give me only the necessities of life " ; and to his brethren he says : " Labour not to be rich, but set bounds to thy prudence " —that is to say, act as reasonable men, who eat and satisfy their hunger, not as those who are never contented. Where there is peace of soul and a quiet conscience there

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are many more delights found in moderate possession than in splendour and luxury—especially when the conscience is disturbed as regards the source whence the money was obtained, or the use to which it is applied.

“A secure mind is like a continual feast. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasures without content. It is better to be invited to herbs with love, than to a fatted calf with hatred” (Prov. xv. 15, 16, 17).

“Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content” (1 Tim. vi. 8).

When we have the necessities of life we have no absolute wants to trouble us; superfluities, so far from adding much to our enjoyment, only plunge us into innumerable cares.

Our Saviour desired that no worldly cares should trouble the peace of His friends. “Be not solicitous.” “Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.” What is gained by anxiety? It is the punishment inflicted upon those who are over-eager to live well, to make money and to keep it. Anxiety is

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part of the interest borne by this capital, but it produces nothing. To be troubled and anxious over one's daily work is to add suffering to one's toil, and to diminish the chances of success. We do best whatever we do cheerfully, with energy and courage ; fear and despondency lessen our activity, render it barren, mean, distrustful, and often mar its results.

But, it may be asked, how are we to avoid living in a state of incessant uneasiness, when we think of the dangers that beset us, of the fickleness of fortune, and of the uncertainty of the future ? Even a rich man shows his wisdom if he recognises the fact that reverses are possible, and does his best to prevent them, or at least, is prepared for whatever may happen. Still more, then, may a poor wretch, who is constantly struggling with an unkind destiny, dwell in thought upon starvation, which is dogging his footsteps, and upon the privations that he may encounter. Life treats him in so niggardly a fashion, how can he hope to find food for to-morrow ?

Our Saviour tells us that the heathen argue

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thus: *Hæc enim gentes inquirunt*, but those who know themselves to be the dearly loved children of their heavenly Father, and realise the riches and goodness of God, who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field, ought to be free from all such fears. Let them live to-day as best they can, and leave anxiety for to-morrow to Him, who is the Lord of the future.

This is a marvellous doctrine, in which the most profound wisdom is illumined by the light of faith. It teaches man, not only to be happy here below, but to make his happiness a very real ground of merit. How many people might at once be delivered from the heaviest and most crushing portion of their misery, if they deducted from it, all their anxieties regarding the future? How can men fail to be happy, even in their darkest hours, if they trust in God's fatherly goodness, and instead of despairing of the morrow hope in Him firmly with all the strength of their love and faith? There is no question here of that false resignation, of that kind of philosophical fatalism, taught by some of the ancients, by which man

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denies the existence of suffering and refuses to recognise real dangers, because he will not look forward to a future that he knows, or assumes, will be disagreeable. Such tranquillity would be spurious, based on falsehood, and could only produce an affectation of serenity. We may draw a curtain or shut a door, between ourselves and the impending danger, but we can never rid ourselves of the thought that the danger is there all the same, living, and ready to crush us. Our fears may be diminished, but they are not cured, and wisdom of this type covers the eyes, but does not heal the wounds of the soul.

Our Saviour bestows something better than false freedom from care. He does not prevent our seeing the unpleasantness that lies before us, but He removes our apprehension by destroying its cause, and reminds us that the future is in God's Hands, and that God, being our Father, is full of tenderness and love towards us. Thus the freedom from care which, among the pagans of old, was a vain and doubtful benefit, proceeds, in the case of those who believe

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in God, from a faith that is as sure, as it is reasonable.

Undoubtedly everything is swayed by His Providence. Wherever man has not attempted to disturb by his works, the great harmonious action of the natural law, wherever the rule of God's infinite goodness prevails, there do the smallest and most insignificant creatures find food, clothing, and shelter. We have but to open our eyes to see it. All misery in this world is the direct or indirect result of human passion or wickedness, and below physical evil is often a moral evil. Wherever there is suffering, we may be sure that some perverse will has, by its interference, disturbed the orderly arrangement of God, and thwarted His purposes.

VII

Our Saviour's reasoning on this point arouses our admiration by its poetical charm and its logical clearness. His words tend to incline men's hearts to receive what is good, to implant in them calm love and

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confidence in God, and His arguments are closely connected, precise, and convincing. They are seven in number, and we shall do well to consider them separately, in order to perceive their force and to appreciate their beauty.

The first is this : The life is worth more than the food which supports it, and the body more than the raiment that clothes it. Therefore, as God has given you your life and your body, why should you be solicitous about food and raiment ?

You were not instrumental in procuring your life, it came to you as a free gift ; nor were you concerned in the formation of your body, and yet it exists. If we could imagine that you, being still nothing, had been able to perceive the numberless and complicated conditions upon which your existence depended, and to reckon up the circumstances which would have to work together if ever you were to have a place in the material world, you would certainly have despaired of ever being born ; and now that you do exist, if you were to consider the complexity and delicacy of your bodily frame, if, like a

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learned physiologist, you were to reflect upon the marvellous equilibrium existing between the countless different elements, which must work harmoniously together in order to preserve your being, you would deem it impossible that your life could continue, even for one hour.

Yet you have been born, and you live, having been created and preserved by God's power and goodness ; and in comparison with this marvellous gift of life, what is the daily supply of food that you require, or the cotton, wool, or silk that you need for your raiment ?

But man, with his ungrateful heart and fickle thoughts, thinks so little of God that he might imagine Him to be like himself ; he fears lest God's infinite goodness should some day overlook his needs. Our Saviour's second argument is directed against this fear.

“ Behold the birds of the air ; they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns ; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they ? ”

Of all living creatures, birds seem most

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sure to find their daily food. They can pass from place to place with unrivalled ease and speed. They need so little nourishment that "to eat like a bird" has become a proverbial saying. They find food everywhere—in the air, on the trees, on the earth, in ditches, and on the surface of the water. They are hatched, covered warmly with down. And what do they contribute towards all these advantages? Absolutely nothing. The ant stores up food, the wild beasts carry their prey into their dens, the domestic animals work for man, or serve for his amusement, but, except at the nesting season, birds seem scarcely to touch the earth; they live in the air and sleep on any suitable branch. Plainly their heavenly Father feeds them, though they are not of any special value above that of other creatures. In fact, our Lord says elsewhere: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" Someone may argue that a bird is a graceful and pleasing songster, and that its plumage is often beautiful, but is it for that reason more precious in God's sight? Where, according to St Matthew, our Saviour used the general term *birds*,

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St Luke, with greater precision, records what was doubtless the exact expression : "Consider the ravens, for they sow not, neither do they reap, neither have they storehouse nor barn." Ravens have gloomy plumage, harsh voices, and are unattractive, void of all charm, yet "God feedeth them." Even in the Psalms (cxlvi. 9) David reminds us that God "giveth to beasts their food, and to the young ravens that call upon Him." How much more should man, who is the beloved child of God, and whose soul has acquired an almost infinite value in virtue of its redemption, rely upon the care of his Father, who is in Heaven? If it is true, as our Saviour affirms, that the hairs of our head are all numbered, and that not one of them shall perish, it is certain that we may firmly be convinced that Providence will supply all that is necessary for our existence.

Why should we trouble ourselves by excessive anxiety even about necessities? Shall we continue in a state of alarm altogether unreasonable? Lest we should be tempted to do so, our Saviour adds two

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further arguments to those already adduced, contrasting the futility of our human cares and exertions with the splendid generosity of God.

He asks, in the first place, what benefit we derive from our agitation, our vain desires, and our useless regrets. "Which of you by taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit?" And shortly before He had said: "Thou canst not make one hair white or black." Surely, then, it is a folly to give way to ambitious dreams and boundless hopes, since neither dreams nor disappointments can affect matters of far more importance than the colour of a hair or the height of a man. Evidently we must help ourselves, if we are to secure the help of Heaven, for man has undoubtedly great power of injuring both himself and his destiny, but all good is in God's Hand. If it is almost certain that a man, who wishes to ruin himself, will succeed in so doing, nothing is more uncertain than the success of a man, who is determined at all hazards to grow rich. We are sure of nothing, neither of defeat nor of victory; neither of

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a fall into servitude nor of an exaltation to honour and glory.

One man runs after fortune, which he never reaches ; another lives at his ease, and fortune comes unsought. "The rich," says David, "have wanted and have suffered hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good." The former wanted, because they relied upon what was weak, untrustworthy, and vain ; whilst the latter have been succoured by Him who possesses all things, and needs but to open His hand to fill every living creature with blessing.

This brings us to the second part of our Saviour's argument : "For raiment, why are you solicitous ? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow ; they labour not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these."

Solomon's very name suggests wealth, ability, splendour, knowledge, royal state, and every possible resource. To him other countries sent their purple, silk, ivory, gold, costly wood, and exquisite perfumes as a tri-

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bute of luxury and magnificence, yet after unparalleled efforts and successes, recorded in his writings, Solomon never obtained for himself raiment that could compare in beauty and grace with that of the lowly woodland flower. Can any man, considering this poverty on the part of the wealthiest of kings, and the lavishness of God towards the most insignificant creatures, be so foolish as not to live in a state of peace and resignation ? Can he do otherwise than confess his helplessness and abandon himself into the hands of Him who is all-powerful, trusting to His fatherly care ?

Simple reflections of this kind, enable us to understand better why we are to seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, as all other things will be added unto us. We can explain also the feeling of the saints which is expressed in St Paul's words: "To Him who is able to do all things more abundantly than we desire or understand, according to the power that worketh in us ; to Him be glory in the church, and in Christ Jesus, unto all generations, world without end" (Eph. iii. 20, 21).

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If God's bounty bestows such beauty upon the grass of the field, which is to-day and to-morrow is cast into the oven, a man must be almost without faith, who can doubt that he too, is an object of God's fatherly care.

This last reflection supplied our Saviour with His fifth argument : " Be not solicitous therefore, saying ' What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed ? ' For after all these things do the heathens seek." The heathens had no knowledge of God, or only a mistaken idea of Him ; and his gods, who feasted on ambrosia and defiled Olympus with their revels, were not supposed to have much interest in mankind ; only Europa or Ganymede could stir Jupiter's feelings, and the mass of mortals were but a foolish and importunate race in his eyes.

If we deny God's power and regard man alone, his very weakness and the fact that he seems to be a foundling, the offspring of some blind force, defenceless, and exposed from his birth to the hostility of nature which God has cursed, we again realise the uncertainty of the morrow.

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Which will win the day—his own will, weak and resourceless, or hunger, thirst, and cold, the wild beasts of the forest, the criminals that infest society, epidemics that poison the air, bacteria that circulate with his blood, pain that besets his way through life and death that closes it ?

It is impossible to insist too much upon this fact : the theories which deny God's existence or misrepresent Him, are in themselves the most terrible scourge that can afflict mankind. They touch man in his mind, which is the seat of his happiness and of his sorrow. They set anxiety and despair in the centre of his intellectual and moral life, and we suffer less from real pain than we do from the ideas which we form of it. We torture ourselves more by our own views of life, than is justified by the course of life ; whereas it behoves us to be optimists and to believe in that Providence which St John calls " love."

There are after all, but very few people who die of want and starvation ; whereas there are very many who through lack of faith in God's Providence, are constantly in

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a state of depression and blasphemous despair, because they do not see who will feed them and provide for their needs of the morrow. Want of confidence in God, carried to extremes, leads even to suicide. Job exclaimed : " The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be His holy Name ! " He knew well, that all could be restored even in this world if such a restoration would be for his good, and that, even if no such restoration took place in this life, in the life to come he would receive abundant compensation. But a man who lacks faith and confidence is deprived of all, when he loses his money. Then the prospect of the morrow becomes so unbearable, that he commits suicide rather than face it.

This is the natural place for our divine Master's sixth argument : You, who have faith, know that you have a Father in Heaven watching over you ; He knoweth all your needs. Cast your care upon Him, and He will sustain you. He gave manna to the starving Israelites, and sent a raven to carry bread to His prophet. You are not required to tell Him your wants when you turn to

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Him ; make not long supplications. He knows what you need, and knows it better than you do. " Would you, being evil, give your child a stone when he asks for bread, or a serpent, when he asks for fish ? How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him ? " The Lord will provide what is necessary for you ; trouble not about your personal needs, but seek first the kingdom of God and His justice—that is to say, instead of toiling to become rich and to get on in life, labour for the glory of God, to make His truth known.

Our religious aspirations can attain no more sublime height. To rely upon God and think nothing of self ; so completely to forget self, in this childlike dependence upon God, as to think of nothing but the kingdom of God and His justice ; that we who are poor and wretched creatures, encompassed by dangers, uncertain of life from one moment to another, that we should come to Him who possesses everything in the plenitude of His kingly power, and begin by saying to Him, not : " Give me this day my daily

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bread," but : " Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," requires such daring, such greatness of soul, such deep unselfishness and love, such loftiness of aim, that only God could conceive it and implant the thought in His chosen people.

VIII

Two considerations present themselves here from different points of view, both are of the greatest importance, and the words of Holy Scripture force us to examine them.

The first relates to the law which makes labour a condition of our life.

The second relates to absolute poverty, as an element and condition of a perfect life, in the religious meaning of the words.

Are we to conclude that this beautiful exhortation to have confidence in God's fatherly care justifies us in being idle, and that it gives us peace of mind whilst it sanctions inactivity of our bodily and mental powers ? Those who believe, or pretend to believe, that it does so, accept a theory

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contrary both to truth and to common-sense. The notion of evangelical poverty is closely and essentially connected with the idea of a life of toil and austerity. Our life is subject to the law of suffering and labour, and every Christian is bound to acknowledge it from the outset. The Gospel forbids unprofitable anxiety, unreasonable cares, and such pre-occupation as is an insult to God's Providence, but it repeats and renews our obligation to suffer and toil day by day : " Be not solicitous for to-morrow, for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

It is a remarkable fact that over-anxiety for the future is an evil common to the poor, who despair of God, and to the rich, who are filled with the spirit of riches. Both, in their different circumstances, displease God—the former because they distrust Him, the latter because they rely solely upon themselves. It is impossible to imagine that our Lord intended to inculcate in the poor that false security, productive only of indolence, which He condemned so sternly in the case of the rich man, who reckoned confidently

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upon the morrow. To regard this exhortation, to find peace of mind in God as a permission to do nothing and to lead a useless life, would be entirely a misunderstanding of our divine Master's teaching.

One of the chief advantages of the poverty that He extolled is that it forces men to lead active, healthy, and happily laborious lives. The work that poverty exacts brings a blessing in this life.

Why is work a torture to some men, whilst to others it affords the most pure and un-failing delight? The answer is easily found. In the one case, work is done under conditions of feverish anxiety, and the worker is disturbed by the wish to have done with it, and by his passionate desire to rival those who, having the means of livelihood, need not work. In the other case, on the contrary, work is accepted quietly and with good will, and, even if it be not of a high order with regard to its object, it is made honourable by the intentions with which it is done. He who hates his work, is troubled by evil desires; his soul is in revolt; he is gloomy, bad-tempered, and enslaved by the spirit of

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riches. He, on the other hand, who desires poverty desires also the lot of the poor—that is to say, a life of daily work—but he is free from torturing cares, his spirit is cheerful, and his heart is free.

The Gospel, far from annulling the law of labour, makes the worker, even the day labourer called to work in his master's vineyard, the type of a Christian ; what it forbids and condemns is over-anxiety and excessive care. While it tends to remove all that is painful in a laborious life it leaves the happiness arising from a voluntary activity which is based on noble principles. The Christian is no idler, a constant victim to ennui and depression, nor is he an unwilling slave, suffering violence in the prison-house of life. The salary that he earns, is to him an object of secondary importance, although others are apt to lay so much stress upon it ; he cares far more for those glorious rewards, surpassing all his hopes, and which he is sure of eventually possessing. In this way he passes through life, avoiding both the anxiety of those who look forward to money and the disappointment of its possessors—

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for anxiety and disappointment are the Scylla and Charybdis on either side of the narrow way leading to happiness. Even in this sad world the Christian has solved the problem of happiness, for though he does not as yet enjoy perfect bliss, still he is in the conditions most favourable to felicity.

If the same principle is applied to human society, it becomes evident that work is essential to the healthy condition of nations as well as to that of the conscience. Progressive races are those that work, and Virgil's "*Hanc olim veteres*" expresses an unchanging truth. When, however, society places workers and barbarians on the same footing, treating them alike with contempt, as Cicero does in his *Tusculan Disputations*, it is a matter of certainty that the next generation will witness the beginning of decadence, whether it be that of Augustus or that of Louis XIV.

What is the use of an idle man and of an uncultivated mind? His faculties decay, his intellect is clogged and destroyed by inaction, his character is embittered, and his will gradually perishes. Only his evil tendencies

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grow and flourish. We read in Holy Scripture that the sluggard is pelted "with a dirty stone"; and inevitably he becomes the most contemptible of beings, whatever be his social rank.

If the Gospel had done nothing beyond proclaiming the happiness of those who work it would have, nevertheless, done much good, for the law of labour is a masterpiece of wisdom. Labour does more than transform the world and subdue the forces of nature; it makes man a king, in the moral as well as in the material sense of the word, for it increases both his energy and his happiness.

It would be a mistake to suppose that rich men who are idle, enjoy the benefits of leisure and repose more than the men who work, for these benefits owe all their attractiveness to the labour which produces them, and without it they are merely stagnation and weariness.

A more philosophical consideration reveals further beauties in a life of labour. The toilers give the highest thing that it is in their power to bestow—viz. their life; in return they gain their livelihood, thus ac-

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quiring a dignity similar in kind to that which is God's by virtue of His independent self-existence. Continual exertion promotes their growth ; and the humblest worker's life is a constant series of efforts, and, therefore, an unbroken course of moral progress. Many men congratulate themselves upon the attainment of some position, that they would never have reached had they not been goaded on by necessity. If the words *Beati pauperes* were translated "Blessed are the workers" the rendering would not express the whole truth which they contain, but it would certainly convey an idea of much of the real and substantial happiness announced by the first Beatitude.

The full meaning of the Beatitude is, however, something far higher than this, for it reveals to us what lies at the end of the road, to which detachment from the world, self-denial, austerities, labour, and confidence in God all tend. Its goal is sanctity—the aim of all who follow our Lord's teaching. To love poverty or moderate comfort for its own sake, is to enjoy a certain amount of temporal happiness, but to love it because

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it involves detachment from all that could separate us from God; the sacrifice of all that could stifle our supernatural love; the casting aside of all that could hinder the soul from rising towards the infinite—to love poverty because it is the necessary condition of perfect charity, this is indeed to plunge into a state of supernatural bliss of which our unaided powers can form no idea—it is to reach the full happiness made known in the Gospel, and to enter here below the kingdom of God.

Such is the poverty sought by the saints, and loved especially by St Francis of Assisi, for he, after Jesus Christ, most perfectly understood evangelical poverty. The saints who loved poverty took the first Beatitude literally, and followed most strictly the example set by their divine Master. They had the courage to abandon themselves completely and without reservation to Providence, to trust absolutely in God as they found Him revealed in Holy Scripture and in our Saviour's life. Before His coming Job resigned himself to the deepest privations. David cried: "I am a beggar and

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poor, the Lord is careful for me " (Ps. xxxix. 18). And later on, the two great apostles, Peter and Paul, confirmed the same great truth. St Peter gives his disciples the precept to cast all their care upon God, for " He hath care of them "; and St Paul bids his followers " be nothing solicitous, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let their petitions be made known to God." All of them knew that poverty was the perfect state, consecrated by the divine Master, whose whole life was spent in it. He was born in poverty and He died in poverty. From the meanness of the stable to His death upon the Cross: He underwent all possible privations: He had no cradle in His infancy, no money wherewith to pay the tax, no house wherein to celebrate the Pasch, no place where He might lay His head, no grave wherein to rest. After He had referred to the commandments of God as an indispensable condition of salvation, He mentioned poverty as essential to perfection. Those who knew Him best, and understood Him well enough to perceive that their own self-denial con-

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stituted their chief claim to His favour, said : " Behold, we have left all things, and have followed thee : what therefore shall we have ? " In His answer, our Lord affirms the general promise which He had given in the first Beatitude : " Amen I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel." This was to be the fulfilment of the promise : " Theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

Such words aroused the hopes of the saints and filled them with unspeakable strength and joy. They were of the number of those regarding whom God had said in the ancient law : " They shall have no inheritance. I am their inheritance, neither shall you give them any possession in Israel, for I am their possession " (Ezech. xliv. 28). This happiness inspired them with a passionate love of renunciation and poverty in order that they might be privileged to exclaim with David : " The Lord is the portion of my inheritance " ; " Thou art the

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God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever." Such a privilege as this is better than all the treasures of the world; and men like St Anthony and St Francis rejoiced to the hour of their death that they had "left all," and their sole care was to find something further of which to deprive themselves.

IX

It is impossible to leave the subject of the first Beatitude without further reference to St Francis of Assisi, who more than any other saint exemplifies its true meaning and beauty. He might be called a living version of the Gospel, and no commentary will ever illustrate the blessedness of poverty more fully than his life. In Italy and its neighbourhood St Francis added a kind of human aureola, an additional glory, to this Beatitude, which was already invested with a divine beauty by our Saviour's words and the charm of their Eastern colouring. All that gives holy poverty its dignity, attractiveness, and grandeur; all that makes it an element of

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joy in this world, a pledge of freedom, and an attribute peculiar to the children of God—all this is found in St Francis—living, speaking, and working with cheerfulness and zeal—and he is in an especial degree characterised by his simplicity, generosity, and grace.

From his boyhood he was called by his contemporaries “the flower of the youth of Assisi,” for he lacked no physical or moral quality that could render him pleasing and endear him to his neighbours. He was the foremost at every festival and contest. Just as St Teresa loved the romances of chivalry, so did he delight in the songs celebrating heroic deeds; and although he was a cloth-dealer’s son, and brought up to that trade, his most ardent desire was to be a knight. His elegant clothing, chosen with just that touch of singularity which enables a man to set the fashion and dictate its changes; his lavish expenditure under all circumstances; and the place secured for him among the young men of his native town by his high spirits, courtesy, and air of good breeding—all these attractions led his parents to de-

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clare that they thought he must be a prince rather than their son. He was easily moved and ready to respond to every emotion or fancy; he could not leave a beggar's request for alms unanswered. Often he would desert his noisy companions and wander alone along the paths overlooking the pretty valley of Assisi—one of the most charming spots in Umbria. But was he nothing but a light-hearted youth, misunderstood, purely sentimental, and incapable of any real effort or of serious employment? We know that he was not; but Providence was so disposing his surroundings that the man, who was to be most admirable in his poverty, should gain all the merit of it. His biographers insist upon the fact of his possessing great abilities before his conversion—one of them even tells us that he was most successful in making money; and another goes still further, and explains that he showed great politeness and capacity in business matters, that he was remarkably affable, and at the same time a very clever tradesman.

He might have increased his father's fortune and have lived in luxury, but—to

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use his own expression—he fell a victim to the beauty of a lady, and wedded her, and her name was Poverty.

There is something plainly divine in the conversion of St Francis. Only God could have concentrated so much grace, dignity, and force upon one occurrence which is replete with poetical sentiment, with the spirit of adventure and chivalry, and with a certain dramatic charm.

The poetical sentiment is seen, in that St Francis took Poverty as his lady-love in the same way as a knight or a troubadour dedicated himself to the service of a lady, in whose honour he would thenceforth show his prowess and compose his verses. He speaks of Poverty in terms, which only Dante can rival; and nothing but a poetical genius can rise to the same height as love: it clings like a creeper to the mystic tree. We must refer to Canto XI. of Dante's "Paradise" if we wish to find any language resembling the passionate utterances of St Francis, when he spoke under the inspiration of his love of poverty. It would be scarcely possible to speak more passionately, and to regard the

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object of this passion as more truly alive, than the saint does in his famous prayer : "O Lord, have mercy upon me and upon my Lady Poverty. She, the queen of virtues, is seated upon straw, complaining of being despised by her friends and treated as an enemy. Forget not, O Lord, that Thou didst leave the abode of the angels in order to woo her. She welcomed Thee in a stable, she was with Thee during Thy whole life, taking care that Thou shouldst not have a stone whereon to lay Thy head. When Thou tookest the field for our redemption, Poverty was ever Thy faithful follower, and deserted Thee in no conflict. And when Thy Mother, who likewise followed Thee to the end, could no longer reach Thee, as Thy Cross was too high, my Lady Poverty clung to Thee more closely than ever. Whilst Thou wast dying of thirst, she was watchful lest a little water should be given Thee, so that it was in the arms of this spouse that Thou gavest up Thy life. Who would not, therefore, love my Lady Poverty beyond all things ? "

Francis espoused Poverty. It was not

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enough for him to make her his friend, for friendship only touches the heart ; nor did he make her his religion, for religion affects only the soul directly ; nor did he take her as his rule, for a rule concerns the externals of life, the body, speech, and gestures ; but he took her as his spouse, forming with her that close, complete, and indissoluble union that of two makes one ; of two souls one thought, of two hearts one love, of two bodies one flesh.

A touch of romance was necessary to add dignity and the poetical beauty of chivalry to this union ; this romantic element found its place in it quite naturally.

A very simple design, together with a very wise and practical plan, gave rise to all the wonders that fill the stories of chivalry, and this history is not deficient in dreams, travels, and disguises, as the reader will perceive.

St Francis was still bearing arms when he had a dream. A magnificent palace stood before him, from the walls hung shields marked with the cross, weapons, and trophies. In the most richly decorated apartment sat a very beautiful young bride, and a voice

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was heard, saying: "This palace, these arms, and this bride are all for thee and thy knights." When we remember that he was then an esquire, in the train of the noble Count Walter of Brienne, and that he was aiming at knighthood, there seems nothing very extraordinary about this dream. The wonder begins when the young esquire suddenly quitted the army to prepare for another kind of warfare and to engage in very different adventures.

Having decided to live in poverty, he wished to test himself before breaking openly with the world. Surely this was a sensible idea. He went to Rome, and there asked alms, after having exchanged clothes with a beggar. Here we see the future knight making his way into the fortress in disguise, and forming acquaintance with the princess of his dream. It is difficult to say which aspect of the story is thenceforth the more true—the literal and real or the romantic and marvellous. The experiment succeeded, and Francis, far from being repelled, became yet more enamoured by the unpleasant features of poverty. On his return from

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Rome, his companions noticed that some change had taken place in him, and questioned him on the subject, and one of them suggested that he must be in love and thinking of marriage. "You are right," replied the saint seriously, "and the bride whom I have chosen is richer, nobler, and more beautiful than any that you have ever beheld."

Is not this a most perfect romance of chivalry? The dramatic element in the story is most touching, and a tragedian might make it the subject of a striking and affecting scene. The parents of St Francis could not endure to see their son living like a miserable vagabond. With tears they besought him to return to a way of life that seemed more reasonable in the eyes of the world, and at last, when all other means failed, they had recourse to severity. Stern measures are always dangerous, for those who employ them are apt to fall unconsciously into an excess of cruelty. Disappointment begets irritation, which in turn begets rage, whereby men are blinded as to their own actions. Soon St Francis was both

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poor and persecuted. He was often penniless, without a shelter, hungry, driven from place to place, overwhelmed by the ridicule of his neighbours, and chased from Assisi. But his keenest suffering was due to his father's blind fury. One day he was summoned to the bishop's court that he might make restitution of all that he had ever received from his parents, and renounce all claim to his inheritance. This was the occasion of a scene unequalled in its tragic passion. Whilst his father was stating his case with the utmost vehemence before the court, Francis, driven to extremes, and acting under the influence of a divine inspiration, stood up, and addressing the bishop, said : " My lord, I will restore everything to my father, even the clothes with which he has provided me." He went out shuddering. In a few moments he returned, clad in a hair shirt. Then with a gesture and in a tone that amazed the bystanders, so that tears were shed and protests were heard on all sides, he exclaimed : " Listen now, and understand me. Hitherto I have called Pietro Bernadone by the name of

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father ; henceforth I shall say with truth 'Our Father who art in heaven,' for that Father is my sole treasure and hope."

Thus did St Francis wed Poverty. A soul which gave itself so freely could not fail afterwards to realise the true ideal of poverty as taught in the Gospels. Christians in every age will admire his firmness and loyalty in following the way upon which he had entered, the poetic charm with which he concealed his firmness, and above all his tender, filial love of God, who in His fatherly care guided the events of the saint's life. In St Francis we see the type of character which the Gospel teaching aimed at impressing in all its dignity and beauty. St Francis knew no half measures, no partial sacrifices. He who putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is unworthy of that heavenly kingdom, which is the possession of the poor. St Francis would have nothing in this world ; money to him seemed the property of the devil, nor would he even touch or carry it. He regarded the coarse clothing which he wore, and his cords which served as a girdle, as objects which he was

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only allowed to use, and esteemed the first beggar whom he met had a better right to them than he himself had. He frequently gave them away to clothe the destitute. Our Lord forbade those who had devoted themselves to a life of poverty to take anything for their journey. They were to travel without scrip, bread, money, and change of raiment. St Francis took this teaching literally for himself and his brethren. He would go barefoot and carry the truth to men. Even in the coldest weather he refused to wear a cloak, saying that the love of God was enough to warm him ; and though he was more merciful to his brethren his concession to their weakness is so slight as to make us smile—he allowed them to sew a few extra pieces of stuff on to their habits, when the cold was intense.

In the Old Testament we read that a prophet's furniture consisted of a table, a bed, a stool, and a candlestick, but this was under the Old Law, and consequently imperfect. Our Saviour had less. Throughout His life we hear of only two things that He possessed—a manger and a cross. St Francis

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belonged to the new dispensation, and so he slept on straw or on planks, thus honouring the memory of our Saviour at His birth or at His death. Often he sat on the ground to take his meals, and he urged his brethren to have nothing that could recall the world either in their cells or on their tables. He instructed them on this point in a delightful way, saying that all about them ought to remind them of their state of pilgrimage and exile.

When St Clare gave herself up to poverty this future "duchess of the humble and princess of the poor," as Pope Alexander IV. called her, had to sell all that she possessed by auction, and distribute everything to the poor. St Francis would not even have a house of his own ; and during his lifetime he engaged in some notable controversies with his brethren, who maintained that certain convents might be kept as common property. He regarded the matter from our Lord's point of view, remembering His words : "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." St Francis wished

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his followers to be contented with huts, telling them that the way to Heaven was more direct from a hut than from a palace; and once when, on entering a town, he heard someone speak of the house belonging to the Friars Minor, he was greatly distressed, and declared that he would seek hospitality elsewhere, and not of his own sons, since they had abandoned poverty. His food consisted usually of the scraps reserved for beggars; and even at Cardinal Ugolino's table he would produce the crusts and fragments given him in charity, and eat them with relish, for the cardinal loved him too well to remonstrate. Brother Giles said that he was like the swallows, and lived on air. Yet everything about him had so much attractiveness and charm, that men were won over to admire what would otherwise have seemed repulsive. If we may believe the biographers, St Dominic gave way once to an outburst of admiration on witnessing the heroic self-denial practised by St Francis. Throwing himself at his feet, St Dominic reproached himself, saying: "God indeed loves the poor and holy far more than I

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imagined. I promise henceforth to observe evangelical poverty in all its perfection."

It would be a mistake to assume that the poverty of St Francis was disfigured by any of those mean and despicable features which are impressed upon poverty by indolence, malice, coarseness, and the absence of noble and refined feelings.

Any one of these defects would have been enough to rob his poverty of that beauty and perfection which betrayed the presence of some divine element. Francis was higher and better than a sparrow which picks up its food anywhere; he desired that the bread begged of men should be earned by labour and exertion in the sight of God. He thought idleness detestable in a Friar Minor, and used to say: "I cannot endure the idea of shameless men who, in their own homes, would have had to live by the sweat of their brow, and now would fain live by the labour of the poor, doing nothing themselves."

His will contains these words:—"I have worked, and I wish my brethren to do the

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same. Let those who know not how to work, learn. If men pay us nothing for our toil, let us then have recourse to the Lord's table, and beg alms from door to door." We see, therefore, that he begged only that he might practise virtue and resemble the poor more closely. All humble occupations pleased him, and he regarded them as so many ways of being poor. We can hardly refrain from smiling, when we read of the various ways in which this founder of a great Order earned his daily bread. He made baskets, fetched water in a tub that he carried on his shoulder, ground knives, gathered sticks, and hired himself out at harvest-time as a labourer. But while we smile, we are forced to admire him, remembering how St Paul says that his own hands furnished such things as were needful for himself and his companions (Acts xx. 34), and that if any man would not work, neither should he eat (2 Thess. iii. 10). St Francis would not tolerate idlers, and in his striking and picturesque language said once to an idle friar: "Depart, brother fly, thou art but a hornet in our hive."

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There was nothing either cringing or aggressive about this noble beggar. With his love of God he kept freedom of speech and ready wit, mingled with well-controlled irony. On one occasion two cardinals asked his prayers, and he answered : " Why should I pray for you, you have more faith and hope than I have." " What do you mean ? " they asked. " Why, you can rely upon God's mercy, though you enjoy the riches and honours of this world, whereas I, in spite of my poverty, still fear to be lost."

It is easy to understand why the cardinals could make no reply.

Notwithstanding, however, the freedom of his language, Francis was not a Diogenes, nor was he revolutionary or a Pharisee. His gentle, refined, and peaceful disposition was absolutely opposed to everything that savoured of injustice, coarseness, or brutality. He honoured and respected the rich, saying : " I wish all those who are with me never to speak of the rich otherwise than as brethren and lords ; they are our brethren, for the same Creator made them ; they are our lords, for without them we could not continue

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in the state of poverty that we have embraced." He feared lest his friars should give way to spiritual pride, and bade them beware of thinking that their own sacrifices justified them in despising those, who lived at ease and wore fine clothing. A Pharisee feels a secret craving to discover the sins of others, and this proceeds from self-deception, the result of false ideas concerning his own sanctity. St Francis was too honest and straightforward to envy anything but the poverty of such as were poorer than himself. One day he met a beggar whose body was barely covered with a few shapeless rags, and, weeping, he said to his companion: "Ah, my brother, this man puts us to shame. We have made public profession of Poverty, and everyone knows that she is our treasure and our mistress, yet, as you see, she shines with more lustre in him than in us."

The same simile recurs frequently, giving a magic charm to the austerity and poverty of the most winning and attractive of saints. No one can maintain henceforth, that poverty causes irritation, trouble, and degradation,

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or that it is mean and despicable, apt to result in depression and rage. St Francis shows us that, ever since the Gospel was made known, poverty has been a flower of such beauty and fragrance as to attract minds capable of appreciating its poetical charm.

It blossomed first under the blue sky of Palestine, and when St Francis found it in the exquisite valleys of Umbria, its heavenly radiance surpassed even that of the Italian sky.

We have a further ground for wonder when we observe the constant communion with the choicest beauties of nature enjoyed by this poor man, who had renounced all human wealth and refinements. He was a true son of God, having all God's creation as his inheritance—that is to say, he possessed the kingdom of God. The birds, trees, and animals were his brothers; the flowers, streams, and stars, his sisters. He belonged to that great family which depends altogether upon their heavenly Father's care, which knows no other resource than His Providence, no other table than the Lord's,

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no other home than that supplied by His divine goodness. Loving only what came from God, he rejected all the fruits of worldly riches, and in order to gladden his friars he wished them to have gardens, bright with flowers, around their cells.

He composed verses in honour of nature in all its forms, and each page of his life might be described as an extract from some holy idyll, dealing with rural life or with heroic deeds. What could be more fresh and simple, and at the same time more full of piety, than the following short account of a meal eaten beside him in the fields? "One day Francis and Brother Masseo reached a certain town, and being hungry they proceeded, in accordance with their rule, to beg bread for the love of God, each going his own way. When they had collected their food, they met outside the town to eat their dinner beside a clear stream. There chanced to be a fine large stone in that place, and upon it they put the bread that they had received as alms. St Francis, perceiving that the pieces given to Brother Masseo were better and more numerous than his own,

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was filled with joy, and said : ‘ O Brother Masseo ! we are unworthy of such a treasure.’ As he repeated these words several times Masseo asked : ‘ My father, how can you discover a great treasure in a place where all is so poor ? We have no table, knives, dishes, plates, house, or servants, and yet you speak of wealth.’ ‘ This is the very reason why I speak of it,’ replied the saint. “ Human industry has no part here, for whatever we possess, we have received from God’s Providence. Look at this bread that we have begged, this fine stone that serves as our table, and this clear water. Let us pray God to make us cherish this treasure of holy poverty with all our hearts, for He Himself is its guardian.’ Having knelt in prayer, they dined upon their pieces of bread and some water from the stream, after which they rose up, and continued their journey towards France.”

Our heavenly Father did not suffer Himself to be outdone in generosity, by a son so full of love and self-abandonment. It would be impossible to enumerate all the miracles and favours which St Francis constantly

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enjoyed. The words spoken in the parable by the father of his elder son : " All that I have is thine," were literally true of St Francis : he had but to speak, and ask, and he obtained any spiritual or temporal favour. No sooner had he expressed his desire, bowing his head on his shoulder, than God, the Blessed Virgin, angels, men, wolves, birds, fish, and insects hastened to fulfil it. He was poor for God's sake, but rich in God, and though detached from all things he was one of the rulers of the world. As St Bonaventure beautifully says, he had given to the Lord the "two mites" — *duo minuta* — that he possessed in this world — viz. his body and soul : his body that was so wasted by want, and his soul that his humility regarded as so insignificant—and in exchange, God bestowed Heaven and earth upon him.

Such were the beauty, attractiveness, and heavenly joys of the saint who best followed the teaching of the first Beatitude. We know what place his spiritual family occupies in the kingdom of God upon earth, and we can easily imagine that which has

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been vouchsafed to him in the kingdom of God in Heaven. Thus are the promises contained in the Beatitudes fulfilled, in those who practise the virtues inculcated therein.

THE MEEK

By detaching man from this world's goods, the spirit of poverty frees him from the tyranny of matter ; while humility, by filling him with self-contempt and indifference to the judgments of the world, delivers him from the twofold bondage of self-conceit and human respect. It destroys his own opinion of himself, which is always too good, and frees him from all trouble regarding the opinion others have of him, which is generally to his discredit ; hence humility banishes both presumption and anxiety as regards the judgments of men.

Now, the meekness mentioned in the second Beatitude is simply the outward manifestation of humility. It is the visible body of which humility is the hidden soul ; it is the fragrance of this mysterious unguent.

It is only natural that, after declaring the

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poor to be blessed, our Saviour should next refer to the meek, for the spirit of poverty is the true root of humility, and its immediate source. There is a close connection between the spirit of riches and pride, and the bond between simplicity of life and modesty of opinion is no less strong. Wealth has a natural tendency to pride and display ; it makes a brave show and attracts attention ; but voluntary poverty cannot be connected, even in thought, with a pretentious exterior or presumptuous feelings. Poverty goes quietly on foot, wealth bestrides its richly caparisoned steed. St Paul told Timothy to charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches ; and the apostle here points out the two evils that beset wealth : high-mindedness and self-reliance. He who sets his heart on wealth, who seeks riches successfully and takes pleasure in them, is fatally filled with pride.

This pride reveals itself everywhere—in his voice, expression, and gait, in his social relations no less than in his heart—and we find much in Holy Scripture regarding the be-

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haviour of such as give themselves up to the worship of Mammon.

“ The poor will speak with supplications, and the rich will speak roughly ” (Prov. xviii. 23). “ Better is the poor man that walketh in his simplicity, than a rich man that is perverse in his lips and unwise ” (Prov. xix. 1).

“ The rich man hath done wrong, and yet he will fume ; but the poor is wronged, and must hold his peace ” (Ecclus. xiii. 4).

“ The substance of a rich man is the city of his strength ; the fear of the poor is their poverty ” (Prov. x. 15).

Are not men always ready to join in the “ boasting of riches ” ? Do not sycophants throng about the wealthy ?—but from the poor, even the friends that he had, depart.

If the rich man speaks all listen in silence, and then extol to the skies what he has deigned to say, but if the poor man dares to open his lips, they ask : “ Who is this fellow ? ”

Is it any wonder that, in consequence of such flattery, “ the rich man seemeth to himself wise,” having been so pronounced by fortune and by his courtiers ?

The saints who were best qualified to

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judge of this matter never ceased to repeat this fact, and to point out the close connection between wealth and pride on the one hand, and poverty and humility on the other. St Gregory says that poverty supports humility. St Francis of Assisi, an authority in the matter of austerity, in more picturesque language shows how detachment from property increases humility. But this is not all: the two evangelical states of poverty and humility are so inseparable that great doctors, such as Hilary, Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose, and Gregory have assigned to the first Beatitude, the meaning that we propose to give to the second, and have translated the words *Beati pauperes* by "Blessed are the humble."

We have not followed them in so doing, because evangelical poverty seems to be a virtue distinct from humility, inasmuch as a man may be both poor and proud—for example, Diogenes. Meekness, however, is the outward manifestation of humility; and the same virtue is described by different names, according as it is viewed from within or from without.

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The fathers mentioned above, have been followed by various doctors and theologians in regarding the first Beatitude as the glorification of humility, and, not wishing to assign the same meaning to the second, they have explained it in various ways. The idea of meekness comprises so much that each has been able to lay hold of the aspect that appeared to him the most important. A cursory examination of these various interpretations shows us, however, that they are not in keeping with the strictly logical development of our Saviour's idea. Cornelius à Lapide, the chief and most logical of these commentators, has given us a summary of their explanations. He points out that meekness has five degrees. The first consists in gentleness in dealing with one's neighbours; the second in calmness in the presence of others who are angry; the third in accepting ill treatment with calmness of mind; the fourth in the joy experienced whilst suffering persecution; the fifth in the constant return of good for evil, so as to change enemies into friends. Although this interpretation contains shortly the conclusions at

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which many commentators of high authority have arrived, a brief consideration of it proves that it is too broad, and gives rise to great confusion between the various Beatitudes. If we adopt it, we find it impossible to distinguish the meek from the peacemakers, the merciful, and the persecuted, and yet each of these classes has its own Beatitude. Hence four distinct Beatitudes are confused with that relating to the meek, or, in other words, practically suppressed.

In reality, what we call meekness is an attitude rather than a special virtue ; it is the appearance, look, and outward behaviour of those who are humble in heart. Our Saviour seems to have used the word " meek " because He was speaking to simple people, and so designated humility by its outward manifestation. Had He described it in abstract terms, He would not have been understood by His hearers, who were learning a totally new doctrine. The Son of God here made use of a method, that Fénelon says is particularly suitable for employment in addressing persons without education, and that he describes charmingly as " a word

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picture." It is easier to form an idea of a meek creature than of a humble spirit. The former falls under the senses, the latter belongs to the domain of psychology and mental analysis.

We need only refer to other passages in the Gospel and other utterances of our divine Master, to be convinced of the meaning of the second Beatitude. It is explained with perfect clearness in the words "Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls." These wonderful words describe but one state of the soul. What is made known in general terms in the second Beatitude is here applied to a true, personal, and living reality. To take up our Saviour's yoke, to be meek and humble of heart, to have peace of soul—are not all these developments of the same idea? Is not the same quality revealed in this sweet resignation, in this submissiveness which is the outcome of humility? We cannot remove one of the elements that constitute this whole, without at once destroying its meaning, and making it unintelligible. It

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seems to be the very explanation needed of the second Beatitude, its most perfect commentary and most complete analysis.

Our divine Master seems, then, to have regarded meekness as the fruit of submission and humility; but these two virtues are really identical, since submission is humility of the will, and humility is submission of the spirit to the truth. Further, there is obviously a connection, or rather an essential unity, in the obedience that accepts the yoke and the humility that yields to it; in the meekness common to both; and the peace of soul, which is the sweetness arising from such a disposition.

The humble and submissive are, indeed, the meek who shall possess the land.

But what is the meaning of this promise? Let us take the words in their most obvious sense. Our Saviour's discourse was addressed to a crowd of uneducated people, and its only adornments are those derived from the rustic surroundings; otherwise it is simple, and contains neither hidden allusions nor obscure meanings. If we were to devise complicated explanations, and to

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treat these clear and sublime sentences as if they were riddles proposed by a sphinx, we should certainly be acting contrary to our Lord's intention, and be misinterpreting His teaching. Let us assume, therefore, that when He said " they shall possess the land " He was referring to some immediate happiness, some present possession beginning even in this world. The word " land " need not be taken in its literal sense, but in its metaphorical, which is no less intelligible. Suarez remarks that it is probable that our Lord intended His hearers to understand that the meek possess the land, even in this world, not because kingdoms and earthly riches are promised them, but because even in this world they live in peace and tranquillity.

Human beings have always regarded violence and brute force as the surest means of gaining and of keeping those things that they desire to possess. The Gospel maintains the contrary. In the first Beatitude we learn the vanity of worldly goods from the point of view both of present and future happiness. In the second Beatitude, our Lord acknowledges that certain moral

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pleasures are not vain, and certain worldly goods, of a kind superior to vulgar riches, are not useless, but He warns us not to make the mistake of fancying that we can obtain them, or keep them, by force of pride or by pride of force. Such goods are virtue in general, considered as a factor in temporal happiness — *e.g.* self-control acquired by detachment from self; freedom from the world's tyranny, which is expressed in false opinions and overbearing prejudices; the esteem of those whose good will has some worth; the sympathy of our fellow-men; and finally the peculiar protection of God. All these advantages belong to those, whose humility makes itself outwardly perceptible by their meekness, and we may say truly of them that they thereby possess the land, —that is to say, they enjoy all that it can give which is worth having, and whatever can contribute to their present happiness.

I

Without stopping to discuss the beauty of virtue and the essential and predominant

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part that it plays in human happiness we may briefly assert that virtue is beautiful, that it makes men happy, because it is the realisation in life of all that is reasonable and wise. It is essentially well balanced and harmonious, keeping each faculty, each little wheel in our delicate moral machinery, in its due place, and regulating our conscience. As we have to live in a world exterior to ourselves, it settles our relations with other persons and things. It is the sole source of all order and peace. If virtue were really practised here below, it would involve the application, in all its grace and beauty, of the law of love, justice, and truth, by means of which God intended in the beginning to establish the reign of happiness in Eden.

Humility is an essential condition of all virtue, which without it cannot exist. Virtue makes a man willing to order his life aright, to regulate his actions in accordance with the true nature, organisation, and importance of things as God has assigned them. But how will he be able to impose rules upon his will, unless he begins by forming a sound opinion of all these various elements, so as

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to recognise the place that truly belongs to him with reference to them ? Now, what is this place ? What intrinsic value and what exterior importance does man possess ?

Man is not the beginning, the end, the foundation, or the centre of anything. Nay, even his own beginning, end, foundation, and centre are outside himself. What seems to be most truly his, most evidently part of his very self, has come to him from some external source, and will not long remain in his power. It is a monstrous presumption, therefore, on the part of men to fancy themselves the centre of the world, laws to others, judges of truth, the chief persons in the universe.

What man would venture to put himself on a level with one of the heroes of old, to put a hero on a level with a saint, or to compare a saint with God ? Even this consideration is enough to set a man low down in his own judgment, if he is willing to be guided by truth in classifying himself. He will still find himself to be a very poor creature if he seeks his place in the material world. How much room does he occupy in

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his native town? And what is the size of this town in comparison with the world, or the world in comparison with the sun, or the sun in comparison with space? In God's sight the universe is an atom, and the sun a tiny spark in its midst, and we are infinitely small beings on the microscopic grain of sand that we call the world. Under such conditions, men are surely fools who take pleasure in the thought of their natural worth, or who ascribe undue importance to the body, with its instincts, passions, and sufferings.

If we consider man with regard to power, his weakness and misery appear still more appalling. A man is proud. Why? Is he the master of the world? No man has yet succeeded in conquering a quarter of the globe. Is he a ruler of men? No one has yet succeeded in finding one perfect servant. Is he even master of himself? He has no control over half of the organs of his own body. His lungs and his digestive organs do their work without his help. His blood circulates, his heart beats, and he has nothing to do with either. He is a slave to

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his nerves and his respiration ; his memory is apt to play him false. If he has a degree more or less of intelligence, he does not know why he has it ; if he is alive at all, it is not thanks to himself. His power over his own body is limited to the ability to move his limbs.

In his soul, he is master only of his will, and this is precisely the faculty of which he makes least use.

It is true that Maury was able, with some reason, to say that he valued himself very little when he considered himself, but very highly when he compared himself with others. This kind of vanity resembles that which an ant might feel, who was proud of being bigger than some tiny worm. If we, poor microbes, flatter ourselves that we enjoy certain advantages not possessed by other microbes, our brethren, we reveal clearly our pitiable plight, for our pride is nourished with such miserable points of superiority.

It is true that the supernatural element in us, raises us far above all natural dignities. Baptism all but transforms man into God,

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but though this glory is real and true, man retains only as much as he takes of it. Acknowledge that you have taken very little and have scarcely profited at all thereby.

Your exaltation has been the means of your becoming the laughing-stock of hell, so lamentable have been your falls. You would laugh at a dignified and pompous personage who, during some stately ceremonial, catching his foot in the carpet, should fall prostrate—but reflect that you are hideously ridiculous if, being the adopted son of God, you fall with your face in the mud. If you believe yourself to be a brother of Christ, your faith must also show you that you are an ungrateful, savage, and detestable brother. Your supernatural dignity, so amazing, undeserved, and freely given as it is, has made your sins infinitely great. It would seem that you have been admitted to God's table only that your outrages might be enabled to reach Him. You have profited by the opportunity given you of touching Christ, to insult Him. The angels bestowed upon you a white robe, a garment of light, and you have dragged it through the mire of your

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foul desires. That is the glory of which you boast !

As all this is simply the truth, it follows that a man who is not penetrated with the deepest humility cannot possibly possess the least virtue. Virtue is essentially a just and true relation between man and other beings ; whereas pride is a lie which leads him to assume radically false, unjust, and therefore unhappy, relations with God, men, himself, and all creation. Humility is the only true attitude for his soul, the only state that enables him to maintain in himself and in his relation to others that harmony which is as essential to virtue as it is necessary to happiness.

We cannot help being astonished that the ancient philosophers, who were most enamoured of virtue, almost completely ignored humility. They had only a most vague and imperfect idea of it, and as they never distinguished it clearly, they did not feel the necessity of giving it any special name. The best of the wise men of old were anxious to attract the attention of mankind, and underlying their apparent disinterestedness,

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and even in spite of it, was a craving for the esteem and admiration of others. They aspired to it as their reward, and this strong and constant desire betrays itself even in the wording of their precepts. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius frequently use the expressions "show thyself," "appear," "let men see thee to be." They even went so far as to wish men to honour them because they despised honour. They delivered themselves from love of riches and from love of amusement, but they remained slaves to pride. We may, therefore, say that if among the ancients virtue was barren, narrow, and stunted even in its heroism; if it never reached its full development, which is love of God and one's neighbour, it was never true and genuine virtue at all. The plant was an artificial one, incapable of growing in beauty and of bearing blossoms and fruit, for it was devoid of that humility which characterises all real virtue.

Therefore in the discourse which seems to be a commentary on the Beatitudes, our Saviour insists upon the feature that marks off Christian virtue from pagan virtue, or

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rather the real from the simulated. He says : "Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them : otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven " (Matt. vi. 1).

"Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel . . . so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify—not you, but your Father who is in heaven. When thou dost an alms deed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, that they may be honoured of men. When ye pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. When thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not to men to fast."

Vanity is not virtue, and if humility be absent, all appearance of virtue is nothing but hypocrisy, a farce, or at best an illusion. Instead of being motivated by our conscience and of deriving their merit from the sacrifices that they demand, our good works have no other motive than the desire to impose upon others, and are nothing but an exalted and

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subtle form of selfishness, deserving neither honour nor reward. Even if a proud man be not intentionally a deceiver and hypocrite, feigning to possess virtues that are inconsistent with his real feelings and opinions, still his virtues have no true foundation, for they proceed from a false spirit, and not from their proper motive. What they appear to be is opposed to the principle in which they originate.

A proud man is not good, just, zealous, brave, and temperate, he is proud; his goodness, justice, zeal, courage, and temperance are only the various forms of egoism on the part of one anxious to exalt himself, rather than to serve God and his brethren. La Rochefoucauld says that men may be courageous without possessing courage, and women may be chaste without chastity. Pride itself can adopt the outward semblance of humility; and it does so in the case of ambitious men who have not yet attained their object, for such are, according to St Gregory, the most servile of creatures before they reach their goal, and the most arrogant afterwards. No true virtue can exist with-

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out true humility. As St Paul says (Gal. vi. 3): "If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." We see the truth of these words in the case of those who practise virtue through pride: as soon as their self-love is wounded, or what is good demands the sacrifice of their self-esteem, their righteousness fails pitifully. As one of the fathers says, virtues not based on humility are like dust driven by the wind; and hence the Holy Spirit gives us this admonition (Ecclus. vi. 2): "Extol not thyself in the thoughts of thy soul like a bull; lest thy strength be quashed by folly."

Humility, by detaching a man from himself, produces two immediate effects — first, it enables him to cut himself free from many evils which are a source of suffering, trouble, and disappointment; secondly, it makes it easier for him to control the involuntary and impetuous movements of his soul. It is in producing the second effect, that humility appears chiefly under the form of meekness.

What part of our nature disturbs us and rouses our passions? Evidently the material

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element, our body, and the mind in so far as it is affected by the body. The soul is in itself calm ; pure thought is peaceful and delightful beyond all description. The will becomes a wonderful source of pleasure, as soon as it subjects itself to the intellect or abandons itself to the will of God. The zone of storms, the abode of pain, lies lower down, in the region of the feelings connected with our nervous organisation, or, still lower, in that of the gross materialism of our senses. Hence come tears, disturbances, and those illusions which lead men into suffering and error. Here, in short, is concentrated all our capacity for feeling pain.

No sooner do we examine what we really are, than we begin to loathe this inferior part of our nature. What is our body ; what constitutes that aggregate of the phenomena of our conscious existence in this world that we call our life ? Surely a very trivial thing. It is enough to consider life itself, or, better still, death, to convince ourselves of its triviality. It is true that in one sense there is nothing foul in nature ; but we are speaking now of our own feelings, and it is

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a fact that if anything in this world should fill us with loathing, it is our own selves, or rather the material part of ourselves. If we were only willing to put ourselves on an equality with others, acknowledging that we are not more spiritual than they, nor any way better constituted, even this poor kind of humility would go far towards destroying our affection for our own bodies. We should also have more insight in judging ourselves, and, if we only had the courage to look into it, we should better understand that aggregate of evil forces which is the instrument of all our lust, wrath, jealousy, hatred, and passionate rebellion against what is or what ought to be. We should learn to know, and, knowing, should realise the evil and folly of all those unruly and perverse desires which conspire together within us, constantly attacking and outraging our lives as well as those of others. If this were once accomplished we should determine, with all the force of our will, to keep these desires in check, and instead of entering into alliance with them, instead of feeding and supplying them with means of outlet, we should resolve

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to resist, starve, and stifle them in every place where they lurk.

In this way, we should daily become more truly masters of ourselves and of our own destinies ; through hatred of self we should find salvation.

Our happiness is under our control in a very wonderful degree, since, with the exception of physical pain and death, against which our will is powerless, nothing can make us either happy or unhappy in spite of ourselves.

Consequently, provided we subjugate the lower faculties of our nature, force our passions to submit to a strong and enlightened will, master our moral sensations and emotions (and it is more possible to do so than people fancy), then by exerting our will, we put ourselves out of the reach of most of the sufferings that afflict mankind. Humility, which is nothing else than the uprooting of self-love by means of self-contempt, will bestow upon us this wonderful immunity.

The benefits of humility are still more apparent with reference to our unhappy

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sensitiveness as regards the opinions others have concerning us. As a rule, our vanity makes us both the slaves and martyrs of the judgments of the world, and there are no forms of bodily or mental discomfort that men and women do not undergo in the hope of winning admiration or of avoiding unfavourable criticism on the part of a world that despises both. Our sensitiveness gives such comments, unfounded and rash as they may be, power to make us writhe in agony. Christian moralists have often pointed out the cowardice and stupidity of human respect, but they have, perhaps, not taken into account the power that it has to cause suffering. If a man fights a duel or poisons himself because he has been insulted, the moral injury that he has sustained, though in some cases absurdly slight, must seem to him worse than death. We feel almost as much admiration for saints who, like St John of God and St Francis of Assisi, pretended to be fools that they might be despised in their own cities, as we do for Mucius Scævola holding his hand in the fire, or for St Lawrence on his gridiron. In

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fact, if we had to choose which kind of courage we could display, many of us would prefer to hold our hands over a burning brazier rather than become objects of ridicule to a number of people. Some of the ancient philosophers, perceiving the tyranny exercised by self-love, sometimes required their disciples to begin their course of study by entirely uprooting this feeling, which makes it impossible for the soul to enjoy freedom of action.

A pretty story is told on this subject.

A certain Cynic philosopher, being displeased with one of his pupils, inflicted upon him the punishment of receiving in silence every insult that might be cast in his teeth for the space of three years. The pupil succeeded in accomplishing this ; but his master did not pardon him : he set him the same task for three years more, only, instead of simply accepting insults, he was to pay every passer-by to insult him. The praiseworthy pupil did not rebel, and for three years he conscientiously paid his money and pocketed his affronts. At the end of the time the philosopher, being filled with admiration,

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told the young man that he could teach him nothing further, and no city but Athens could supply him with masters capable of leading him to any greater perfection.

The well-trained pupil, being anxious to make progress, went to Athens, and, having inquired about the most famous professors, he heard of one, who was noted for his rough language and coarse behaviour, which were certainly not Attic in their refinement. "This is the man I require," he exclaimed, and the next morning he attended the lecture given by this boor. The philosopher no sooner caught sight of him than he began to abuse him. The pupil laughed, and thereupon the philosopher, being infuriated, redoubled his abuse ; but the pupil laughed still more. Disconcerted at length, and having exhausted his store of epithets, the master finally asked the young man to explain his merriment, and this strange pupil replied that, although he had been paying for abuse for three years, he had never received so much as on that one day, when it had been lavished upon him for nothing. The master, filled with amazement, declared that

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the young man was indeed worthy of admission to the assembly of the wise.

Whether it be true or not, this story has its value, for it proves better than any argument could do, how much one's personal peace of mind is increased by a cheerful sang-froid and by the indifference which would be the certain and immediate outcome of true humility. This indifference appears constantly in the lives of the saints, and its sincerity and unction render it still more wonderful. We read, for instance, of a holy old man in Alexandria who fell one day into the hands of a band of unbelievers and was grievously insulted by them. Abused, knocked about, and ill treated, he endured everything with a calm face and a cheerful expression, saying nothing. But when at last one of his tormentors, intending to insult him yet more, asked him roughly what miracles Jesus Christ had wrought, he replied : " You can see something of them for yourself, as your ill treatment has not only failed to rouse my anger, but even to annoy me in the slightest degree."

But we must not suppose that this peace,

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based on humility, can only be acquired at the cost of our being exposed to the contempt of all men, or at least of being misunderstood by them. Contempt of human opinion in general, and of insults in particular, has never brought scorn upon him who professes it, but rather the contrary. It would be more true and fair to acknowledge that nothing has more power to win us the esteem of others, than a gentle modesty in which humility reveals itself. The presumptuous are despised, the vain are ridiculed, the ambitious are mortified. Man is by nature pugnacious—*contentiosum hominum genus*—and nothing is more apt to excite hostile criticism than the folly and arrogance of pretentious persons; whereas kindness, esteem, and respect are given without reserve to those who are known to be simple, modest, and humble. Most people, without much consideration, instinctively know that true worth abhors all that savours of boastfulness. The value of fine materials is diminished rather than increased by the use of gaudy dyes. Branches laden with good, sound fruit, ears of corn that are full of grain,

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bend towards the earth. Pride, on the other hand, is so hateful, and everyone feels such a desire to crush whatever exalts itself, that true worth has to apologise for its real superiority as the price of its enjoyment. Before it can be recognised and permitted to reign, it must give up all haughtiness and strip off all ostentation. It has been said that for a man to attain success and to receive generally the honour which he deserves, he must have buried two generations—that preceding him, and that of his contemporaries—and there is much truth in the statement. There is, however, a quicker way of winning the good will both of one's elders and of one's contemporaries, and that is to bury ourselves a little in modesty and humility, instead of waiting until we are literally buried. "Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth" is a sage saying in the book of Proverbs (xxvii. 2).

St Bonaventure pointed out to his pupils this great advantage of humility, saying : "Be assured that if you really have a good quality, others will know it; if you endeavour to conceal it, they will praise you doubly ;

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but if you boast of it, they will laugh at you."

These are prudent words—other people do not like you to give yourself airs, but they are very glad to discover your merits, and as your reputation is their work, they value it all the more highly, and defend it as if it were their private property. Your merits are doubled in their sight, and before God, who judges everything at its true value, your little treasure has acquired an additional jewel—viz. humility—which has a value of its own and its distinct reward.

Honour goes before those who shun it, just as a shadow falls in front of men who turn their backs to the sun. Jesus, having cured the leper, bade him speak of the miracle to no one; but St Luke tells us that the fame of Him went abroad the more.

The truth is, in fact, so universally recognised that frequently clever people consider humility the best means of seeking advancement, and the more ambitious they are, the more they ape humility.

But honour and glory would be a very inadequate reward for the humble, who could

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derive no benefit from it, as scorn of praise is the very life of humility. The land promised to them, has something better than mere words of praise to offer to the humble as their reward and means of happiness. It gives them the sympathy and affection of all who make their acquaintance and who come into contact with them. The humble or meek—for the words are synonymous—cannot fail to be our most pleasant companions in life ; they neither scorn nor judge anyone ; they are kind, unselfish, and calm. The description that St Paul gives of charity is exactly applicable to them. They are patient, kind ; they envy not, deal not perversely, are not puffed up, are not ambitious, seek not their own, are not provoked to anger, think no evil ; they rejoice not in iniquity, but in the truth ; they bear, believe, hope, and endure all things. The humble are considerate, and esteem others better than themselves, and of such it is written, that a man amiable in society shall be more friendly than a brother (Prov. xviii. 24).

How would it be possible not to love

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them? There is scarcely anything so unbearable as pride in this world, and men who are indulgent to all vices cannot tolerate pride. Hatred is aroused only by pride and for pride, and the proud man is detested by those above him, whom he seeks to rival; by his equals, whom he desires to rule; and by those beneath him, whom he strives to crush. He is a usurper and intruder, against whom all unite in self-defence. "Among the proud there are always contentions," says the Sage—there is a constant conflict of arrogance, disdain, insolence, haughtiness, and contempt. The proud within resemble the wicked, of whom Isaias says that they are like the raging sea, which cannot rest, and without they may be compared with porcupines, that bristle at the slightest touch, and wound anyone who comes too near.

It is obvious that every good and kind action involves a feeling of humility, and when we review these undoubted facts—that pride inspires men with horror, when we consider that men are attracted by modest gentleness and sweet humility—we acknow-

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ledge that our Saviour's promise to the meek is fulfilled : " They shall possess the land."

How did our Lord win the hearts of men to an extent never attained by the most idolised of mankind ? How did He find means " to seduce the people," as, when before Pilate, He was charged with doing ?

The only force that He, as Man, employed was that of which the soul is humility, and the outward expression meekness. Long before His birth the prophets had proclaimed the coming of one who should be meek and humble, a king full of gentleness and mercy.

" He shall not cry," says Isaias, " nor have respect to person, neither shall his voice be heard abroad. The bruised reed he shall not break, and the smoking flax he shall not quench . . . he shall not be sad nor troublesome " (xlii. 2, 3).

" Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild," cries the Psalmist (lxxx. 5). " O taste and see that the Lord is sweet " (xxxiii. 9). He was to be gentle even to his violent and cruel enemies : " He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb

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before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth " (Isa. liii. 7).

St John the Baptist was sent to announce Him to the Jews, who were expecting the advent of a prince, a deliverer, and a conqueror, and he proclaimed Him as " the Lamb of God."

As the little infant, once laid in a manger, He has won more hearts and called forth more tears of loving tenderness than in His Transfiguration on Mount Thabor. Throughout His divine life He instructs us, but His silence moves our hearts more powerfully. His actions and miracles arouse our admiration, but the insults that He receives without a murmur awaken our sympathy. His Heart pierced by the lance, His head drooping in death, the wound in His side, His silent lips—these all speak to us with an eloquence greater than any that belongs to any other part of His life. The Christians who love Him most ardently do not appeal either to the terrible God of Sinai, or to the awful Judge of the living and the dead, but they kneel in adoration before this meek and humble God, who, for love of men, was born

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poor as a beggar, who grew up a poor man's child, who was misunderstood and insulted as an impostor or struck and spat upon as an outcast ; arrested like a pickpocket—to adopt an expression used by a missionary in the seventeenth century—scourged as a blasphemer, dragged along the streets of Jerusalem as a fool, and finally crucified like a thief. Yet He whom men treated thus, was in reality the most wonderful, noble, and sinless of the children of Adam.

We can understand the wild joy of the poor in Jerusalem when they saw their King coming, meek, sitting upon an ass, wearing the most modest attire ; whilst the archangels bow down before Him, overpowered by His boundless glory, and raise their Hosannas in His honour, we too can join in the strain and honour Him in His humility.

The truth which our Lord expressed in the second Beatitude as to the prevailing force of humility and meekness, was so absolutely certain in His opinion, that He armed His apostles with nothing else, when He sent them forth to convert the world. Humanly

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speaking, if the preachers of the Gospel had been mighty warriors they might have won battles and taken prisoners, but they would not have convinced men's hearts. What, for instance, would Mahomet have been able to effect against Augustus? Had they been deep philosophers or subtle sophists they might have silenced some opponents and have gathered together some disciples, but they would have left no more trace upon the minds of men than Plato or Marcus Aurelius.

This is the reason why there were amongst them "none wise according to the flesh, none mighty or noble. But God chose the foolish things of this world, that He might confound the wise, and the weak things of this world, that He might confound the strong, and the base things, and the things that are contemptible, and things that are not, that He might bring to naught things that are." It was not that our divine Master had no choice among His first disciples, for there was a noble decurion in their midst, Joseph of Arimathea, who, like Zacheus, was wealthy; and learned men such as Nicodemus, who was

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a Master in Israel; but Jesus passed these over, and gave the places of chief importance to poor, ignorant workmen, whose only possessions were a few worn-out nets.

He made this choice, not only in order that they might be the friends and brothers of the poor, the ignorant, and the oppressed, but because He Himself, the God who fashions men's hearts, knew that such could best be trained in that meekness and humility which prevail over and subdue the conceited and proud.

Their training, and the ministry that He partially revealed to them, together with the rules of conduct that He prescribed for His disciples, all tended chiefly to emphasise the virtues of humility and meekness. "If any man desire to be first, he shall be the last of all and the minister of all" (Mark ix. 34). "The princes of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they that are the greater, exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister" (Matt. xx. 25, 26). "He that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger,

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and he that is the leader, as he that serveth" (Luke xxii. 26). This, then, is a fundamental condition, if souls are to be won to Christ, and though some of the successors of the apostles may have forgotten this teaching it has been practised by saints in every age. One day when St Francis Xavier was about to start on a missionary journey one of his friends, a certain count, remonstrated with him for travelling without any servants, and asked how men, seeing him wash his own clothes and cook his own food, could respect him. The saint replied that the anxiety of prelates to win consideration and authority by means of display, was precisely what had brought the Church of God into discredit.

Our Saviour regarded His own meekness, which gave Him over defenceless to the attacks of His most bitter enemies, as a gage of the conquests that His followers were to make eventually. He sent them as lambs among wolves, bidding them have confidence, for He had overcome the world—He, the most harmless and most patient of lambs. He told His little flock to fear nothing, for it

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had pleased their Father to give them a kingdom—a supremacy over the hearts of men in virtue of the meekness and humility that He enjoined, through which they were to possess the land.

It is wonderful to see how, after receiving the Holy Ghost, the apostles were filled with this spirit of humility. The two most eminent among the Twelve—the one conspicuous by his authority, the other by his apostolic zeal—practised humility in a marvellous degree. St Peter by his constant contrition, modesty, and sympathy with sinners is a perfect model of that humility and meekness upon which our Saviour insisted. We cannot read his epistles without being absolutely convinced of this fact. In spite of his indomitable courage St Paul is inexpressibly tender and humble. No one but himself would venture to apply to him language like that, in which he ever seeks to abase himself. “I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor. xv. 9). “I was a blasphemer and a persecutor and contumelious” (1 Tim. i. 13). He reveals his own

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weaknesses, infirmities, and temptations to all men ; for him honour and dishonour, evil report and good report, are nothing ; he cares only for his outraged, humiliated, and crucified Saviour, and glories in resembling Him.

It is a magnificent testimony to the truth of the second Beatitude that the conquests won by this supremely meek and humble man were so glorious, that Bossuet has extolled them in terms that no orator, perhaps, has ever surpassed. He says in his " Panegyric of St Paul " : " He will go to civilised Greece, the mother of philosophers and rhetoricians, and, in spite of the resistance of the world, the churches established by him will be more numerous than the disciples attracted by Plato's eloquence, although it was believed to be divine. He will preach Jesus at Athens, and the wisest of her senators will quit the Areopagus to learn of this foreigner. He will carry his conquests still farther, and in the person of a proconsul, will cast the dignity of the Roman fasces at his Saviour's feet. Rome herself will hear his voice, and in some future age this haughty city will

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deem itself more highly honoured by a letter that Paul has addressed to its citizens, than by the famous speeches that Cicero made there."

No doubt St Paul's power depended chiefly, as he acknowledged, upon the grace of God working with him; but no doctrine is more certainly true than that a man must be humble if God is to work with him. The meek possess the land, not only because they exercise an irresistible influence over mankind, but because God, the Almighty Ruler, becomes their friend, their helper, and almost their servant.

This is repeated clearly and frequently in Holy Scripture. We read that every proud man is an abomination to the Lord (Prov. xvi. 5), that pride is hateful before God and men (Ecclus. x. 7), and that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble" (1 Peter v. 5). God is jealous of His glory, and suffers no man to usurp it, for He cannot cease to be God—that is, Everything—whilst a creature is nothing. This is the reason why He is honoured by the humble, who, like His own divine Son, seek not themselves

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and their own glory, but the honour of their Father. The greater a man appears in the sight of his fellow-men, the more he can glorify God by abasing himself before Him, and the more favour does he find in His eyes.

Of all God's children none has ever undergone such humiliation as Jesus Christ, who, being the Son of the Most High, did not shrink from that stupendous sacrifice which involved taking upon Himself the form of a servant; and it was in that form that God declared Him to be His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased.

He chose, as the Mother of God, the humblest and meekest of His daughters, who, being a queen by race and in her matchless virtue, was content to be a hand-maid in His sight.

Wherever amongst His creatures there is one in voluntary poverty, whose heart is humbled to nothingness before His glory, to him does God incline, him does He know, honour, bless, and hear; He grants his petitions even before they are uttered; He fulfils his desires whilst still unexpressed;

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He hears the desire of the poor, and answers beforehand "the preparation of their heart." But God Himself is not proud, nor does He take pleasure in our poor homage ; we must worship God, because such is the true order, and God is Truth itself. Nevertheless, no one can be more humble than God, no one is more hidden, silent, and gentle than our heavenly Father. He is the perfection of humility and patience, for, being infinite, He lowered Himself towards what was not in order to create, and, having created man, He lowered Himself again in order to love him. But this is not all, for the more generous and lavish His dealings with us the more He has concealed, humiliated, and effaced Himself.

When we consider the created world we are lost in admiration of the magnificence of His works, but He never reveals Himself to us. In the Incarnation His love was still greater ; He effaced Himself yet more, taking the poor and lowly form of man, whom He had created. In the Eucharist He annihilates Himself still more completely ; for His bounty can go no further, as He there

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bestows the royal gift which is the utmost that even He can give. In it He is less visible than in the Creation, less perceptible than He was in His human form, and He bears in silence ingratitude and blasphemy to an incomprehensible degree. Insulted to an inconceivable extent, His forgiveness is boundless, and His self-renunciation surpasses anything that we poor, wretched beings can imagine, far less can we attempt to rival it.

The marvellous result of this is that His humility is the only aspect of His greatness which our nothingness can ever truly strive to imitate ; our very poverty helps us to resemble Him in this respect, and by detachment of soul, we too, become the sons of the Most High.

Perhaps, too, this is the reason why He puts Himself—if we may say so—at the disposal of the humble, and becomes their property, and refuses them no supernatural favours. “Humble thyself to God and wait for His hands” is the precept of the Holy Spirit, and this is surely a promise of strength. Our Lord thanked His heavenly Father for

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having hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and having revealed them to little ones.

In the words : " His communication is with the simple " (Prov. iii. 32), we have a promise of light. " He hath regarded the humility of His hand-maid, for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Here God's love of the humble is revealed.

" I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other, for . . . he that humbleth himself shall be exalted " (Luke xviii. 14). The sins of the humble will be pardoned.

" He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble " (Luke i. 52).

Glory is promised to the lowly. The sublime words of Mary's *Magnificat* are the fullest expression of triumph ; we notice that this inspired canticle chiefly celebrates humility in all its forms and in its deepest abasement. The Wise Man did not, therefore, deceive us when he gave utterance to a sentence almost as paradoxical as a Beatitude :

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“ It is better to be humbled with the meek, than to divide spoils with the proud ” (Prov. xvi. 19).

II

It is a coincidence too strikingly beautiful not to be an obvious token of truth, that this feeling of humility, which makes a man give glory to God and honour Him as supreme, also puts a Christian into the condition most favourable to his happiness in this world. If we refer to our Saviour's well-known words : “ Take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart ; and you shall find rest to your souls,” we see that those to whom rest of soul is promised—that is to say, who are happy—are the humble of heart.

They are happy because their humility, and the submissiveness of will that proceeds from it, make them accept readily their Master's yoke. With loving eagerness, and even with joy, they endure what is painful as soon as they know it to be God's will. They submit to the laws and trials of life

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with a will as firm and strong as if they had themselves created and arranged these things ; they desire nothing in this world but what is in accordance with the will of their heavenly Father, and in the form assigned by Him.

Undoubtedly, true and perfect happiness consists in the possession of what we desire, and as nothing happens in this world that God does not either ordain or sanction, it follows that the meek cannot fail to be the happiest of the human race, since their desires are in loving and complete accord with the will of God.

Human wisdom perceived long ago that, since happiness consists in having all that we desire, it follows that we should desire only what we have. There is no escaping from one of two alternatives—either we set our hearts upon imaginary things or we content ourselves with realities. The latter course is plainly the better if we are to have any peace in life.

The ancient philosophers, and especially the Stoics, carried this principle very far and very high, although it is simply a matter of

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common-sense. All the pagan sages taught their followers to be resigned, moderate, content with little, to yield to the laws of nature and to the will of the gods. Such was the way of happiness known to the ancients before Mahomet's fatalism gave all these theories an arbitrary form.

Plato bade his pupils beware lest virtue and happiness should prove to be nothing but care for one's own preservation and comfort. If they were identical with such care, a man, who was truly such, would seek to prolong his life indefinitely, and would cling to existence by every means in his power; whereas it behoves him to place the matter in God's hands, and to believe what women say, that no one can escape his destiny.

Epictetus said : " Ask not that what is to happen, may happen according to thy desires, but desire that it may happen as it will, and thou wilt be happy."

Marcus Aurelius enlarged upon the subject and discussed its various aspects. He wrote : " Love solely that which befall thee, and the lot assigned thee by fate. Nothing can be more reasonable than this course of

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action. No one has the power to hinder thee from being in accordance with the law of nature, nothing can befall thee contrary to the law of universal nature. . . . Does it trouble thee that thy weight is no more than it is? Why, then, should it trouble thee that thou art to live so many years and no more? Adapt thyself to thy destiny and to the events that it brings . . . thou shouldst have for nature an ever-deepening respect, remembering that all will go well with thee if thou livest and actest in conformity with the will of nature. . . . If thou regardest as either good or evil things that are not subject to thy will, whenever such an evil comes upon thee, or thou art deprived of such a good, thou wilt not fail to murmur against the gods. . . . If they have decided what is to be my lot their decision is wise, for what motive could lead them to do me harm? ”

Seneca, too, when striving to prove that happiness cannot exist without virtue, wrote : “ Virtue will stand firm and endure every event not only with patience, but with good will, knowing that every temporal difficulty is subject to the law of nature. Just as a

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good soldier bears his wounds, glories in his scars, and, even when pierced by arrows, dies still loving the leader in whose cause he falls, so does virtue implant in the soul the ancient principle : 'Follow God.' But whosoever complains, weeps, and laments is, nevertheless, forced to do what is ordered, in spite of his repugnance he is obliged to obey. Is it not a folly to act under constraint rather than to yield willingly ? . . . Let us by a great effort force our souls to submit to all that the existing constitution of the world requires us to bear, since to accept the decrees of nature ensures a happy life."

So spoke the pagans of old, but although their fundamental idea of happiness is good and sound, something is wanting to it, the absence of which vitiates the whole. It is easy enough to tell a man to cease to desire this or that, lest his desires should go further than the limits assigned by God or by nature, but it is by no means easy to practise this precept.

It is puerile to suppose that a pupil, however docile he may be, can change his desires, will, and the whole bent of his

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nature at the bidding of his teacher, as easily as a soldier changes his rifle from one shoulder to another at the word of command.

Excellent people who would fain be philosophers tell us that when we have not what we like, we must like what we have ! Admirable advice ! If we *have* gout, fever, bad masters, or hard labour to undergo, we shall soon realise the value of such vain words and futile counsel. Before a man can learn what desires he must have in order to ensure happiness, he must be master of his own wishes. Strictly speaking, happiness does not consist in having what one wants, or in wanting what one has, with a more or less Platonic and purely theoretical cœt of volition, but it consists in having what one really craves, or in loving what one has with concrete, real, and lively satisfaction and love.

The Stoic doctrine appears almost to be a bitter mockery when we remember the force with which a man's passions urge him on to all that is contrary to the ordinances of nature and to the will of God, and from this point of view, the Stoics are not unlike

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the schoolmaster who continued giving an eloquent instruction to a pupil who was drowning. We must note also that the paganism of Marcus Aurelius, in spite of its wonderful teaching, was absolutely sceptical with regard to the existence of the gods; and it is difficult to see how the average man of flesh and blood, living a life more or less swayed by his passions, and a prey to conflicting interests and various chances, could resist all his powerful feelings and tendencies, merely at the bidding of a very unreal philosophical system. Still less can we imagine that a formula given by Epictetus, and followed by a more or less fanciful act of his own will, could enable a man to find inward peace, calm, and true joy in spite of the rebellion of all his instincts, in which no preliminary change had been effected.

The addition of the words: "Nero was this wise philosopher's pupil," would bring out forcibly the unpractical character of the philosophy which Seneca taught in his many admirable letters and treatises.

The fatalism that characterises Mahometanism supplies a stronger motive than the

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resignation taught by ancient philosophers, since it really produces a certain kind of peace in the human heart, though not a peace calculated to make men truly happy or enlightened. It is, on the contrary, peace based on depression, the tranquillity of despair. "If by any unlucky chance," wrote Voltaire to Helvetius, "fatalism were true, I should prefer to know nothing of this cruel truth."

The fatalist practises most strict and absolute submission to the decrees of powers superior to himself ; but these decrees are stern commands, orders issued by the caprice of deaf and blind authority. Man has nothing to do but cringe before this unknown and pitiless force, which may exalt him or crush him, he knows not why, and this force is described by the most ill-omened name in our language—viz. fate.

The fatalists say : "It is written," hoping thus to find consolation, quell their inward rebellions, and avert despair. But who can find sweetness and peace in the writing of a shadowy hand, that inscribes its inexorable decrees on human flesh with an iron pen in

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ink, red with blood or mingled with tears ? A man who affects resignation is scarcely human. When Théophile Gautier describes the beasts of burden in the East, he says : “ In the drooping ears and dejected air of a Turk’s ass we see a recognition of the fact that fate appears to have destined the ass to be beaten and to die.” Do not these words call up in our minds a melancholy and depressing picture of that part of the human race which is condemned to stagnation and misery ?

Christian resignation is very different from fatalism. Holy conformity to the will of God is no mere phrase against which all our inward feelings rise in revolt, as in the case of the Stoics ; still less is it that abject submission on the part of the weak to the crushing force of destiny, that we call fatalism. Born of love, it is the mainspring of action and of courage.

Before a Christian can say to God “ Thy will, not mine, be done ” he must be sure that God’s will is perfect. He knows that, far above the short-sighted and imperfect aims of men, God’s wisdom reaches from end

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to end mightily, and orders all things sweetly. He knows too that, in spite of deceptive appearances and passing trials, none of his heavenly Father's children can finally be abandoned. He knows that "all things work together for good to them that love God," and that their end is eternal bliss. This knowledge is implanted not only in his mind, but in his heart, which is the heart of a son, capable of adoration and not merely of respect and affection.

Throughout his life, a Christian who realises all this, strives to silence the evil instincts within him, to restrain the rebellious passions that alone can thwart God's ordinances. Day by day he must strengthen the supremacy of the spirit over the concupiscence of the flesh. With a deep and living resolution, that becomes part of his very being, he desires that the will of his heavenly Father be accomplished. God's will is so assimilated to his own, that it becomes his meat and drink.

He accepts and relinquishes the things of this life with equal readiness, regarding the will of God, which gives them their being, as

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alone worthy of consideration. The Christian desires and hopes one thing only—to adhere to his God and to put his hope in Him. Nothing that befalls him can make him sad, for he casts all his troubles upon God, who takes better care of all His creatures than they could possibly take of themselves. His joy is calm, peaceful, and unfailing ; no one can take it away, for the man who could do this would need to be stronger than God, and able to order events according to his will.

The sage or the saint whose will is united with God's will, really reigns with Him, whilst seeming to serve Him. Everything accords with his will, since his will accords with everything.

Isaias describes the undisturbed dignity of such a state in the following eloquent words :—" My people shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest " (xxxii. 18). This wealth is something far higher than material riches ; it is that to which St Paul refers when he says : " The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing ; that

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you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Ghost " (Rom. xv. 13).

There is a marvellous force concealed in the submission and confidence that constitute Christian resignation. Those who venture to maintain, as some have done, that " resignation is nothing but ignorance, weakness, and indolence disguised," are undoubtedly blind, for men ardent in doing God's will, have at all times displayed the greatest energy. They are hard as granite in their power of resistance, ardent as flames in their zeal.

A saint once exclaimed to the powers of hell let loose against him : " If God has given you strength to prevail over me then consume me, but if He has refused this permission, why do you make fruitless efforts ? " It would be impossible to enumerate all who have sacrificed their lives rather than be false to God's will, and equally impossible to record all the great and heroic deeds that would never have been undertaken or accomplished, unless the men who resolved to perform them had known that they were acting in accordance with God's will.

Whoever wishes better to understand the

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deep and true happiness resulting from conformity with the divine will, should read the eighth and ninth books of that wonderful "Treatise on the Love of God," in which St Francis of Sales reveals the inmost thoughts of his heart. He expounds most clearly, with loving affection and attractive grace, the origin, nature, and marvellous effects of this conformity, and points out that the Christian desires what God wills, because God is his best friend. There is not that constraint which renders submission painful—there is only love. "The commands that are most easily carried out become burdensome if imposed by a harsh and tyrannical spirit, whilst everything is delightful that love enjoins. Thus Jacob served Laban gladly, and the time seemed short because of the greatness of his love. We read that a man had lived contentedly for eighty years in Paris without once leaving the busy town; no sooner, however, was he ordered by the king to remain there for the rest of his days than he went out to visit the country that it had never occurred to him to wish to see. . . . Others, on the contrary, eagerly dash

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into the midst of enemies, and risk their lives again and again, to fulfil a mere wish that the king may have expressed. David was once in his stronghold, while a garrison of the Philistines occupied Bethlehem, when he expressed a desire : ‘ O that some man would give me a drink of the water out of the cistern, that is in Bethlehem, by the gate.’ And three valiant men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water out of the cistern, and brought it to David ; but he, seeing the danger to which these men had exposed themselves in order to gratify his wish, would not drink the water, but offered it to the Lord, for it had been obtained at the risk of their lives.”

This love makes the will perfectly indifferent to the things of this world, and so it produces complete detachment. This holy indifference cannot be better described than in the words of St Francis de Sales : “ A heart that is truly indifferent is like a lump of wax in the hands of its God, ready to receive all impressions that proceed from His good pleasure. It chooses nothing, but is equally disposed to accept anything ; it wills

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nothing but God's will, and sets not its affection upon the things that God wills, but sets it solely upon the will of God who wills them." He goes yet further, and says that indifference becomes perfected, until finally the human will merges into the will of God ; it has not ceased to exist, but " it neither wishes nor is able to desire anything more ; it abandons itself wholly and without reserve to the good pleasure of divine Providence, and steeps itself in God's good pleasure, and mingles with it, until at length it is undistinguishable from it, and lives, hidden with Christ in God, yet not itself, for the will of God lives in it." The holy doctor, according to his custom, adds a comparison, and asks : " What becomes of the brightness of the stars when the sun appears on the horizon ? It is not destroyed, but lost and swallowed up in the sovereign light of the sun. In the same way, the human will mingled with, and lost in the will of God, can no longer be distinguished from it, and has no longer any volition apart from God."

In this state there is neither weariness nor

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pain : " We may well believe that our Lady, the most holy Virgin, was so well pleased at carrying her beloved child Jesus in her arms, that her pleasure either prevented all sense of weariness or else rendered her weariness delightful." Pain, again, is so " tempered and permeated with the sweetness, joyousness, and clemency of God that even its bitterness becomes pleasing. It is strange, but nevertheless true, that if the damned were not blinded by their obstinacy and hatred of God, they would find consolation in their suffering, and perceive God's mercy mingling with the flames that burn them for all eternity."

Such a theory as this, though it may seem somewhat extreme and arbitrary, is not extravagant, since it does not require anything beyond the power of love in man.

We need not discuss the excesses of which hearts inflamed with carnal passion are capable, nor the very real sufferings that they endure with rapturous delight. Have not artists and scholars forgotten everything whilst engaged in the realisation of some ideal or in the solution of some problem ?

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Whilst Demetrius was besieging Rhodes the sculptor Protogenes, who lived in the suburbs of the town, was at work upon his masterpiece, amidst the din of battle and within reach of the enemy's missiles.

At the siege of Syracuse, Archimedes was so deeply interested in a geometrical theorem that the town was taken, and he was killed, almost without his being aware of it. Pliny speaks of an artist who went on painting in a besieged city "almost under the swords of the combatants." The cudgels raised above Themistocles' head did not silence his arguments. Can we imagine that God—God as revealed to us in the Gospel—is less likely to arouse the passionate love and devotion of His saints than any kind of art, science, or other interest? Surely no one with any understanding would venture to maintain that such a thing was possible, and were this so, we should have to acknowledge our inability to understand the lives of the saints, who were saints only because they were carried away by the love of God. This being their sole passion, and existing in a degree of which a carnal mind has no con-

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ception, everything in this world became to them indifferent, if not actually hateful, according to the author of the "Imitation."

David cried out to God : " What have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth ? " (Ps. lxxii. 25). And again : " In the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do Thy Will : O my God, I have desired it, and Thy law in the midst of my heart " (Ps. xxxix. 9).

Remember St Paul's impassioned words : " Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation ? or distress ? or famine ? or nakedness ? or danger ? or persecution ? or the sword ? . . . In all these things we overcome because of Him that hath loved us " (Rom. viii. 35, 37).

And again : " In all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Ghost, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God ; . . . by honour and dishonour, by

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evil report and good report ; as deceivers, and yet true ; as unknown, and yet known ” (2 Cor. vi. 4-8).

All the saints, through love of God, have rejoiced to make these glorious words their own, and have found their happiness in self-denial, attachment to God, and in the peace of soul which they produce—the reward promised in the second Beatitude.

III

Those persons to whose minds the words humility, meekness, and obedience suggest all that is mean and cringing are completely in error. Nothing is morally more exalted than humility, for it necessitates a perfect knowledge of self and makes man worthy to enter into some relation with God. Nothing is stronger than meekness, the very preservation of which requires absolute self-mastery, and nothing is more noble than Christian obedience, which recognises God alone as master and king.

Meekness, considered thus, reveals the

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moral beauty of a soul and the light that it enjoys. To be meek one must be humble, and humility is self-knowledge. To be meek is to be gentle, and gentleness is knowledge of mankind. To be meek is to be patient, and patience is knowledge of God. Meekness is the climax, completion, and refinement of moral perfection ; it is the beautiful result of the union of all the virtues, harmoniously grouped and blended in due proportions. Whenever we see meekness on the surface of a human character, we may be sure that underlying it are virtue and happiness. True meekness depends essentially upon charity, and that is the reason why it includes all the virtues. It proceeds from God, our great, unseen Neighbour, and contact with Him always enlarges the soul, and makes it more kindly disposed towards our poor, visible neighbours in this world. Let us, therefore, believe in the piety of one who leaves the house of God with a calm and cheerful expression, but let us distrust the pious man whose face is stern and gloomy as he turns away from the altar.

The friends of God are always charac-

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terised by their being also the friends of man.

This moral beauty is at the same time a piece of real wisdom, from which a man derives immediate benefit. The meek are always the best loved, to whom others yield the most, because they claim so little. "A sweet word multiplieth friends, and appeaseth enemies, and a gracious tongue in a good man aboundeth" (Ecclus. vi. 5). Long before the Beatitudes were uttered, David declared that the meek should inherit the land and delight in abundance of peace (Ps. xxxvi. 11); and elsewhere he promises to the meek that light and inspiration from God which will guide and teach them His ways. Everything, therefore, is at their disposal—men and Heaven; but the lot of the violent is very different, for they meet with resistance everywhere; they may impose silence upon others, but they cannot force the wills of others into submission. As Bossuet says: "No man does less what he wants, than he who aims at doing all that he desires. . . . If he resists not his own will he is unjust to his neighbour, a source of

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annoyance to the world, of insult to God, and of trouble to himself. Let us, therefore, moderate our desires from the beginning, so that they may be checked by reason, rather than by an unhappy necessity, which to our craving adds the frenzy of disappointment."

The meek have at all times been those who have called forth most the admiration and sympathy of mankind. We may adopt Seneca's words, and say that there can be no moral greatness without tranquillity. At a far earlier date Solomon had written: "My son, do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men" (Ecclus. iii. 19). Moses, the lawgiver, the conqueror, the prophet, the greatest hero of the Old Testament, is described as "a man, meek above all men that dwelt upon earth" (Num. xii. 3). In truth, if it be a glory to govern God's people, it must be a yet higher glory to govern oneself. Even in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit, who could not contradict Himself, praises this great man in terms which seem to declare that the promise contained in the second Beatitude was fulfilled in his case. We are told that

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the meek shall possess the land, and whatever figurative interpretation we put upon the last word, it is certain that that reward was bestowed upon Moses, the meekest of men, whom God sanctified in his faith and meekness. In Ecclesiasticus xlv. we read that he possessed the affection of all, and was beloved of God and men ; his memory is in benediction, for he won the esteem of all ; the Lord made him like the saints in glory, so he enjoys the rapture of Heaven ; and God glorified him in the sight of kings, and magnified him in the fear of his enemies, consequently Moses received honour in this world. With his words he made prodigies to cease, so he had control over the forces of nature ; and God gave him commandments before his face, and a law of life and instruction, by virtue of which he still rules over his people.

Of all the sovereigns of the Old Testament King David may most truly be said to have possessed the land, for he reigned not only over the soil, but in the hearts of his subjects by love, and over the minds of all other men, his contemporaries as well as all subsequent

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generations, by his wonderful charm. He used to pray God to remember him and "all his meekness." This virtue was conspicuous in him, and the fact that he spoke thus, proves that his meekness constituted his best claim upon the respect of men and the grace of God.

Louis XIV. bore witness to it when he said that the art of winning affection was the least costly means of government.

In the pagan world the men who arouse our admiration are those who were most completely masters of themselves. When Antoninus was dying, someone asked him to choose the password for the day. He gave the word *Æquanimitas* almost with his last breath, and then waited for the dawn of eternity. We all know of the patience shown by Socrates, of the clemency shown by Augustus, and the virtues of many others whose deeds are related in the classics fill us with admiration. There is scarcely a saint of whose meekness many characteristic stories are not told, which give us the best idea of his heroic sanctity of life.

St Francis of Sales wrote on one occasion :

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“For some time I have been beset by obstacles and secret contradictions which have assailed my tranquillity, but they, more than anything else, afford me a sweet and delightful peace, and announce to me the speedy union of my soul with God, and this is the sole passion of my heart.”

Does not wisdom consist chiefly in knowing how to control oneself, how to suffer, how to wait, and how to use each thing in its due season? Is not wisdom that tranquillity of spirit which, together with dignity, characterised the noblest men of antiquity? Is it not the beauty of that patience of which St James says that it hath a perfect work—*i.e.* that it produces masterpieces? It marks the superiority of the man who is unaffected by his outward circumstances because they have no power to disturb him. As St Teresa says: “Let nothing trouble thee, let nothing alarm thee, for all will pass away.” It proves the superiority of virtue that is firmly established and does not depend upon external influences. “True virtue,” says St Francis of Sales, “does not derive its sustenance from outward

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repose, any more than good fish derive theirs from the stagnant water of a swamp."

It is the living principle underlying all real, continuous, and conspicuous progress. Genius itself is long-enduring patience, and this is still more true of the habits of the will.

It is the chief test of all strength and fidelity, and is only acknowledged when it has stood the trial of time, for although almost everyone is capable of some effort, some sudden display of energy, only a few can stand firm without wavering, and advance without hesitation, calmly and surely. If we, in our weakness, could not rely upon God's mercy nothing but endurance would ever receive the everlasting crown, for our Lord says: "He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. x. 22).

IV

I have referred to St Francis of Sales, and just as it was impossible to discuss the first Beatitude thoroughly, without considering

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its realisation in the life of St Francis of Assisi, so we cannot form a true idea of the second without reference to him, who was, as Bossuet says, "the personification of meekness."

What strikes us most forcibly as we first approach this gentle saint is, that in him we find the most complete fusion of the qualities of humility, meekness, equanimity, and self-control, and we see clearly that these are the various outward aspects of one and the same underlying virtue. Of all the many charming anecdotes which reveal to us the saint's character, it is impossible to refer to one, as illustrating one of his perfections, without at once discovering in it all the rest. St Francis de Sales used to teach a doctrine which justifies the meaning that I have assigned to the words *Beatitudes*. In his "Treatise on the Love of God," he writes: "With peace and meekness of heart a most holy humility is inseparably connected. I mean a noble, real, pliable, and solid humility, which makes us ready to receive correction, tractable, and prompt to obey."

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The various characteristics of meekness, as I have attempted elsewhere to define them, are here enumerated, and therefore, instead of taking his qualities one by one, and discussing separately his humility, his goodness, his conformity to the will of God, his equanimity, and finally the influence that he had over this world, which is promised to the meek as their possession, it will be much more interesting and profitable to discover the connection between all these qualities as they existed in him, and to consider how completely they form one whole. To show how his humility blends with his meekness, that meekness which is "pliable" to men and "tractable" to God—on the one hand adapting itself to God's will in perfect conformity, and on the other winning the love and esteem of all men to a degree that enabled him to exercise a true supremacy over them—all this would require a very profound and exact study both of the saint's character and of the real nature of things. Without attempting to draw the complete picture we may sketch some rough outlines of it.

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St Francis used to say that the humble were blessed, because they would reach their haven safely. "This Beatitude," he said, "pleases me more than all the rest, and I would fain that my righteousness, if there be any in me, should be concealed from all men and known to God alone at the last day." Here we have the doctrine common to all the saints who regard humility as the foundation of all possible perfection. It is the hidden root, embedded in the love of God, whence it derives the sap which nourishes all visible virtues. In St Francis this root seems to produce only one fruit, or rather, if there are various fruits, they are all impregnated with the same sweet flavour—that, namely, of meekness. We should be at a loss to decide whether in him humility had preceded meekness or whether he possessed the one virtue in greater fulness than the other. Like his Master, he was at once meek and humble, and the virtues that he loved best were those which he described as "little," not because they are wanting in true greatness, and offer no scope for heroism, but because they are retiring and modest. They

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make no display, give no offence, and are lovable by reason of the simplicity, modesty, and charity in which they are, as it were, steeped.

“They are not nailed at the top of the Cross to attract from afar, glances of admiration, but they grow at the foot of the tree of life, and are in consequence more fragrant and more bedewed with our Redeemer’s Blood. They have more power to mortify and sanctify the heart than hair shirts, disciplines, and other external means of mortification, the use of which is apt to make a man pass for a saint.”

Some saints in their humility have shunned honours with a kind of shyness, have hidden themselves in desert places, and have endured real struggles in their efforts to avoid the burden of the episcopate. The humility of St Francis accorded ill with such a dignity, but it was too true, too deep, and too pure to have that combative tendency which would urge it to resist authority or the prudent counsels of those qualified to speak. Thus he writes: “All my life I have desired the lowest place, and so greatly

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dreaded being thrust into prominence as a bishop, that it was torture to my feelings to be in any company where there was no other dignitary to whom I could defer. Unless I had considered God's will, I should have preferred to be a simple priest carrying the holy water, and devoting myself to the service of the poor, rather than hold a crosier and wear a mitre."

We feel instinctively, though we may be unable to explain the reason, that there is an incompatibility between meekness and a craving for what is unusual or singular. When St Francis accepted the bishopric he did not offer such vigorous resistance as some other saints have done, nor did he, like them, persist in his refusal, but in his poor see at Geneva, he realised his aim of giving a great example of detachment, and thus fulfilled the designs of God. We may quote from an emphatic remonstrance on the part of Bourdaloue, who said that, if all the princes of the Church accepted their high offices in the same spirit of deference to God's will, "we should not see men holding benefices and ecclesiastical dignities by means of

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favouritism and intrigue or by the foulest and lowest methods, nor should we have the grief of beholding men devoid of merit, talent, and all qualifications occupying the **most** honourable positions and undertaking the most important duties."

The result showed the spirit in which St Francis de Sales entered upon his task as bishop. The church of Geneva was a spouse with a very poor dowry and whose face was disfigured by ignorance, rudeness, and heresy; yet he would never part from her, and for once his humility was protected by a law—that, namely, which compares the bishops of the Church with husbands, as having entered into an indissoluble bond of union with their dioceses. Nothing could induce him to leave his rough mountaineers and his poor parishes that were devastated by Protestantism. The King of France loved and honoured him beyond measure, and offered him the Archbishopric of Paris. He even desired to procure him a cardinal's hat, and besought him to remain with him, as being the best qualified person in the kingdom to uphold the interests of religion and of the

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State. In fact, the King's exhortations to remain in his kingdom were enough, as St Francis said, to retain a very great prelate and not a poor priest like himself. Very gently did the saint turn the King's good will into channels beneficial to the Church and to his poor Savoyards of Chablais, leaving all the fine offers "and his great city of Paris" to King Henry.

There was nothing in the least savouring of discourtesy or independence in St Francis, who, as we have seen, sought everywhere some superior to whom he might defer, and was most scrupulous in showing respect to authority. As a rule, men feel towards their intellectual works what mothers feel towards their children; and in the opinion of an author, especially if he has written only one or two books, his own works are unrivalled in style and beauty. St Francis was the author of that incomparable masterpiece known as the "Treatise on the Love of God," which has caused him to be classed with the doctors of the Church—such as St Ambrose, St Jerome, St Augustine, and St Thomas Aquinas. As soon as the book was published

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the Sorbonne, and even James, the heretical King of England, declared its author worthy of this honour.

Moreover, St Francis was conscious of having applied all his intellectual powers and all his soul to the work, and just as Fra Angelico of Fiesole painted his glorious pictures whilst his eyes streamed with tears, so had our saint frequently to lay aside his pen, to give vent to his tears of emotion.

So much for the work ; but what of the author ? If ever anyone was justified in having confidence in his own teaching, it was St Francis of Sales. He was well known as one of the most learned prelates of his time, and two great cardinals, Baronius and Bellarmine, bore witness to his genius ; the Holy See was willing to consult him, and he soon after won the admiration even of Richelieu. Cardinal du Perron, whom Bossuet described as a man of “rare and admirable genius, whose almost inspired works form a most solid defence for the Church against modern heretics,” expressed his veneration for the saint, in words that will be quoted further on. All who were qualified

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to express an opinion, were unanimous in their appreciation of St Francis, and yet it was with reference to this very book that he wrote as follows to his chaplain :—" Lay my poor manuscript at the feet of Mgr. de Marquemont, if he is at leisure and is disposed to read it ; if not, place it in the hands of M. Déville, the doctor of theology appointed to examine books ; and, should he so advise you, present it to M. Lafarge, the Vicar-General, and to other learned men, for I am aware of my own shortcomings. I have no time to revise my little works, and I pray and wish that they may be studied at their leisure and charitably examined by the learned."

After quoting words so full of gentle submission and humility, we need not dwell upon the courtesy and sweetness with which he welcomed even bitter and unjust criticism.

Bossuet says : " His Introduction to the Devout Life is a masterpiece of piety and prudence, a treasury of wise counsels, it leads many souls to God, in it pure spirits taste the holy sweetness of devotion. Never-

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theless, it was publicly abused, even from the pulpit, with the bitterness and passion inspired by a zeal certainly indiscreet or even malicious. If our holy bishop had chosen to contradict these rash preachers, he might have found sufficient excuse for his resentment in the interests of the episcopate, which was insulted in his person, for, as Tertullian says, the honour of the bishops maintains peace in the Church. He thought, however, that, although it was an outrage upon the Church for a bishop to be insulted, far more harm would result from the sight of a bishop filled with anger, eager to defend himself, and zealous about his own interests. This great man was convinced that the insult to his dignity would be made good rather by the example of his modesty, than by punishing his enemies. Consequently he ignored these affronts, and gave no reproof, defence or answer. In one passage in his works he alludes to them casually in such moderate terms that we should never be able to form any idea of their outrageous character, were they not still fresh in men's minds."

There can be no doubt that this peaceful

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attitude of mind was due to his humility. He had shown great surprise when his friends insisted upon his sanctioning the publication of the letters that form the bulk of the work, and, as he expressed it, he made them into a little book by the addition of some trifles, at the request of several people. Was it likely that he, valuing his work thus lightly, should think it worth while to plunge into a warfare of words on its account ?

We will, however, not dwell upon anything suggestive of hostility, for we are not concerned now with the Beatitude of the peace-makers. Let us rather turn our attention to the gentleness which St Francis' humility made him show towards all those with whom he came in contact—superiors, equals, or inferiors. His own opinion on this subject is summed up in a very few lines. “ To submit to superiors is a matter of justice rather than of humility ; to submit to equals is a matter of friendship, courtesy, or good breeding ; but to submit to inferiors is the act of humility which tells us that we, being nothing, ought to cast ourselves under the feet of all.”

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Notice the wonderful self-effacement of the saint, who, in enumerating his relations with his fellow-men, speaks only of yielding to them. His desire to submit himself and to yield to all, is so natural and deep, his humility so genuine and true, that the saint's submission instead of becoming deeper when in contact with a superior, followed the opposite course. To men in high position he paid obedience that was "very affectionate and perfect," but still it was only obedience, whereas on meeting the lowest in rank he was filled with the desire "to cast himself under the feet of all." This is the characteristic of the truest humility and the secret of his unfailing gentleness.

It is scarcely necessary to point out the perfect harmony between his principles and his actions. He had the greatest respect for men of rank, and gave them all their titles ; and there is something so extremely refined in his feelings on this point, that it is worth while to draw the attention of students of character to it. He used to say : "As no one cares less about outward tokens of respect than I do, so no one is more anxious

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to give them to others.” There is no irony in this remark, for irony implies some small amount of pride, and hints at an assumption of superiority on the part of one who looks down on human frailties and vanities. The respect felt by St Francis of Sales was quite sincere, his mind was filled with the most exalted thoughts of God, and consciousness of the dignity of man. It is strange to see how his humility and gentle kindness led him to make use of language which in certain respects, closely resembles that of the most disdainful and violent upholders of the doctrine of the equality of men. He says : “ I have never been able to act like many who, on being raised to a higher position, wish to be treated with deference, and when they write a letter will not deign to sign themselves : ‘ Your humble servant,’ unless indeed they are addressing someone much above them. For my part, I scarcely know how to make fine distinctions among men ; all bear the likeness of their Creator, therefore I sign myself ‘ Your humble servant ’ to all alike, except when I write to Peter and Francis, my own footmen, then I do not use

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this phrase, for they might fancy that I was making fun of them.”

A kind of equality is recognised here by St Francis, as it was by the philosophers of the eighteenth century, but the difference between them—and it is a radical difference—is that the haughty spirit of the philosophers proclaimed an equality tending to despise all that was noble ; whilst the saint’s humility refused to make distinctions among men, only that it may pay more honour and respect to the lowly.

Considerations of space warn us not to enlarge upon this subject, although we would gladly do so, for the beauty and sweetness of St Francis’ character appear in all their fulness in his dealings with the lower classes when he smiles at them, talks to them, and busies himself with their concerns.

His patience with the poor never failed ; it was even greatest when distress made them most importunate. His servants were the objects of constant care and kindness.

In Ecclesiasticus (iv. 35) we read : “ Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household, and oppressing them that are

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under thee," and St Francis of Sales seems almost to be expounding these words when he writes: "We must always remember that our servants are our neighbours and poor brethren, whom charity constrains us to love as ourselves. Let us therefore love them as ourselves, these dear neighbours who are so near to us, who live with us under one roof and partake of the same food. Let us treat them as we should wish to be treated if we were in their place and rank."

We are told that the bishop once took the pen from the hand of his valet, who was writing a clumsy offer of marriage to a rich widow, and he composed a letter so admirably worded that it secured for the man a match beyond all his expectations. When a bishop would do this for his valet, we need not feel surprise at the touching and noble acts of condescension of which he was capable when the salvation or health was at stake of any of those "little sheep which God had placed on the pasture where he was shepherd."

"Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the land." They shall be loved,

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heard, and obeyed, and we may apply to them David's prophecy of triumph : " With thy comeliness and thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously and reign " (Ps. xliv. 5). St Francis of Sales was a sort of living proof of this evangelical truth. Sinners and righteous, heretics, friends, enemies, readers, disciples, and admirers—all, in short, who for any reason whatever, have ever cherished his memory or loved him personally—have been attracted and won by the sweetness of his character, his words, and his deeds. If it were possible that he should have had no authority, right, reason, or ability the attractive force of his marvellous sweetness of character would have enabled him to do more, even without these resources, than they would have enabled him to effect without his sweetness. Some are suspicious by nature ; the least appearance of authority alarms them ; others are captious, and the very mention of rights makes them defiant ; others are naturally wayward—they contradict and argue, as soon as anyone attempts to reason with them ; others are quick to take offence, and as soon as they detect any

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ability or ingenuity, they are up in arms, and one's efforts are rendered futile.

Violence never produces anything but a spirit of rebellion. As St Francis used to say : " The human mind is so constituted that it obstinately resists harshness. Asperity of manner spoils everything, embitters men's hearts, and begets hatred. The good that it performs is done in so ungracious a way as to give little pleasure. . . . The hearts that yield are blessed, and such will not break. . . . We must imitate the angels in dealing with souls, moving gently and without violence. We must attract them as perfumes attract, simply by their sweetness—and how could sweetness attract otherwise than sweetly ? We must follow the example of Jesus Christ, who stands at the door of men's hearts, and lifts the latch, but never forces an entrance." Everyone knows the charming proverb that St Francis employed so often : " One catches more flies with a spoonful of honey than with a hundred barrels of vinegar." When he was practising this method with some very unrefined people, M. de Belley once quoted to him another

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well-known saying : “ Familiarity breeds contempt.” But the saint would not allow himself to be beaten in a matter that he had so much at heart, and replied : “ Yes, coarse and reprehensible familiarity does breed contempt, but not that familiarity which is courteous, hearty, honest, and virtuous, for, as it is the outcome of love, it begets that true love which is never devoid of esteem, and consequently is never wanting in respect. There is no one whom a man respects more, and whom he will take more pains not to offend, than him whom he heartily loves.”

St Francis of Sales had no need of arguments to prove the power of gentleness, for his life spoke with greater eloquence than any words could have possessed. His sweetness gave him power over the hearts and wills of men of every rank, so that while he could influence and control multitudes, at the same time he used that sweet persuasion which fills the heart with filial tenderness and devotion. In all history we hear of no apostle or teacher who converted so many heretics. Some have converted thousands

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of sinners, by the aid of that remorse that gives no rest to a guilty conscience. Others have led pagans to the truth by showing them what they had hitherto not known. Others, again, have uprooted heresy in a given district by killing or expelling the heretical teachers. But of St Francis of Sales alone can it be said that he overcame the pride, obstinacy, and human respect of 70,000 Protestants. Was it by the vigour of his teaching, the accuracy of his reasoning, and the persuasive force of his eloquence? Doubtless all these assisted him in his work, and the grace of God seconded him, but it is well to recall here some words spoken by Cardinal du Perron, whose learning was extolled by Bossuet: "I will undertake to convince the heretics, but if they are to be converted, they must be taken to the gentle bishop of Geneva." We may be sure that the shrewd cardinal would not have said as much of Louis XIV.

The proudest aristocrats felt his influence, and yielded to its charm, and neither dignity nor arrogance could withstand the holy prelate's exquisite grace. One of Henry IV.'s

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courtiers even gave his sovereign to understand that he cared more for the Bishop of Geneva than for the King of France. M. de Belley testifies that he heard men of rank, wearied with court ceremonies, acknowledge that they took their places before the Bishop of Geneva with more respect than they would have felt in the presence of the highest in the land. Not that the gentle bishop dominated them by any remarkable outward dignity, but, as another witness declares : " All the gentleness that can exist in a man was present in him ; one could never see and hear him enough." This feeling gave rise to an extraordinary fear of estranging him, and thus losing the benefit of his words, even in the slightest degree. M. de Belley says : " I have known persons who shuddered at his approach, not for fear of displeasing him—for no one did that—but for fear of not pleasing him enough. For my part, I acknowledged frankly that I found so much pleasure in doing anything that he liked, that I was beside myself with delight whenever he expressed his satisfaction at anything that I had done."

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The impression that his gentleness and kindness made upon persons of distinction, enables us to form some idea of the boundless enthusiasm and affection that the saint had power to awaken in hearts more simple, less critical, and more easily touched. We should have to tell the whole story of his life if we were to attempt to enumerate all the occasions upon which this enthusiastic affection was shown. After his death one of his servants expressed the universal sense of gratitude and love when he said: "I cannot help weeping for sorrow and devoted affection whenever I think of my good master . . . and my only comfort is to think of him and to speak of him to others." Surely this is the language of a truly loving heart. This great bishop, whose humility led him to wish "to cast himself under the feet of all," could not fail to set a most perfect example of conformity with the will of God. It is well known that this conformity was a characteristic feature of his virtue, and an integral part of his meekness. Whenever he spoke of it, it was not enough for him to mention *union* with the will of

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God, he used to say *unity* of will with God. He attained to a really miraculous degree of indifference to worldly matters—such that the ancients would have regarded him as one of their greatest philosophers. It is impossible really to judge of it without reading the eighth and ninth books of the “Treatise of the Love of God.” The description that he there gives of this annihilation of the human in the divine will, is as touchingly expressed in his words, as it was wonderfully realised in his life. He abandons himself to God “as a little child who cannot yet exert his power of volition to desire to love anything but his dear mother’s face and bosom ; who has no thought of wishing to be on one side rather than on another, nor of desiring anything whatever, except to be in his mother’s arms, for he feels himself to be one with her ; without the least difficulty he submits his will to hers, being unconscious of his own will. He trusts his mother to move, act, and wish as she sees best for him.”

Such words as these are very unlike the cold and disdainful philosophy of a Marcus

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Aurelius. May we not truthfully say that this spirit of Christian submission, so full of grace and love, and the barren pride of Stoicism are separated by a gulf as broad as that dividing Heaven and earth, although their practical teaching may be the same?

From the point of view of the identity which we are trying to establish between humility and meekness, we may here compare with the preceding quotation the words in which our Saviour set an ideal of humility before His disciples: "Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). To make oneself little and of no account is a whole, of which obedience is only a part—an aspect rather than a mere result.

St Francis of Sales was so deeply penetrated with this spirit of conformity with the will of God, that he expressed it in various ways, every faculty of his soul seemed impelled to bear its special witness, so that it might be truly said, that every fibre in his heart fully accorded with him on this point. We perceive this conformity in his writings ;

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his reason, like a moralist, states the grounds for this submission ; his imagination paints it in striking and various metaphors ; his will finds expression in language that sometimes astonishes us by its boldness ; and his affection reveals itself in the tenderness of his words.

Let us quote some short passages, chosen almost at random, and referring to each of these particular faculties.

We begin with a philosophical statement.

“ We must not consider the actual importance of the work which we have to do, but rather think that however mean it may be, it has the honour to be willed by God, to exist in the order of His Providence, and to be assigned to us by His Wisdom.” Let us take next an instance of his play of imagination : “ When a man occupies a certain place because God wishes him to be there, he must not think of changing his position, but must remain in the boat which is destined to carry him from this life to the next.”

As an energetic expression of will we quote the following :— “ With the will of God

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purgatory would be a paradise to me, and without the will of God, paradise would be a purgatory. . . . If such a thing were possible, I would rather be in hell with the will of God, than in heaven without it." Lastly, we cull an example of tender affection : " To die on the bosom of God's will is to fall asleep leaning, like St John, on the breast of Jesus Christ. . . . How happy are those souls that live solely on the will of God ! If we find so much spiritual sweetness when we taste it slightly in the course of a short meditation, what must be the delights experienced by souls wholly absorbed into, and united with God's will ? O God, what happiness it is to submit all our affections fully and humbly to those of Thy pure love ! "

This is the cry of a soul convinced of the solid happiness that is found in practising the precept contained in the second Beatitude. Such words as these should be quoted in answer to all the bitter utterances and lamentations of those who, after following all their inclinations and gratifying all their fancies, have discovered too late that these

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things afford no satisfaction, and have been reduced to sum up their whole experience of life in these sad words : " All is vanity and affliction of spirit."

In order to complete this short study of the second Beatitude, we must briefly refer to the virtue of equanimity—the only form of meekness recognised by the pagan philosophers. It is true that all pagan perfection, whether of virtue or happiness, has been seen to fall so far short of the Christian standard as scarcely to need further discussion, and it is enough for our purpose to state that the holy bishop had a mind more perfectly balanced, and a disposition more perfectly serene than have ever been known in any other member of the human race.

Socrates, even, would have admired him. St Francis could say of himself : " I am a frail mortal, subject to passions, but by God's grace, since I have been a shepherd, I have never said an angry word to my flock."

His even temper in dealing with people and things, was only a form of his humility. We find a more or less explicit statement of

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this fact from his own lips: "Would to God," he said, "that I were as indifferent to everything else as I am to contempt." This is the underlying principle or foundation; its details or offshoots are given in the following passage:—"Let us walk humbly, practising the little virtues befitting our littleness:—à *petit mercier, petit panier*" (A little basket becomes a petty tradesman). By the little virtues I mean those that are practised by coming down, not by going up—such as patience, toleration of one's neighbour's weaknesses, humility, meekness, courtesy, and bearing our own imperfections."

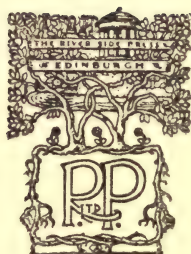
Perhaps no more complete description has ever been given of the various attitudes of mind which collectively make up the virtue we call equanimity. Among the ancient philosophers this quality was often produced by the exercise of a spirit of disdainful pride, but in St Francis it was the outcome of his humility, and, therefore, he had all the merit that can be derived from being constantly calm and self-controlled.

On one occasion a friend reproached him for not having reprimanded a great sinner

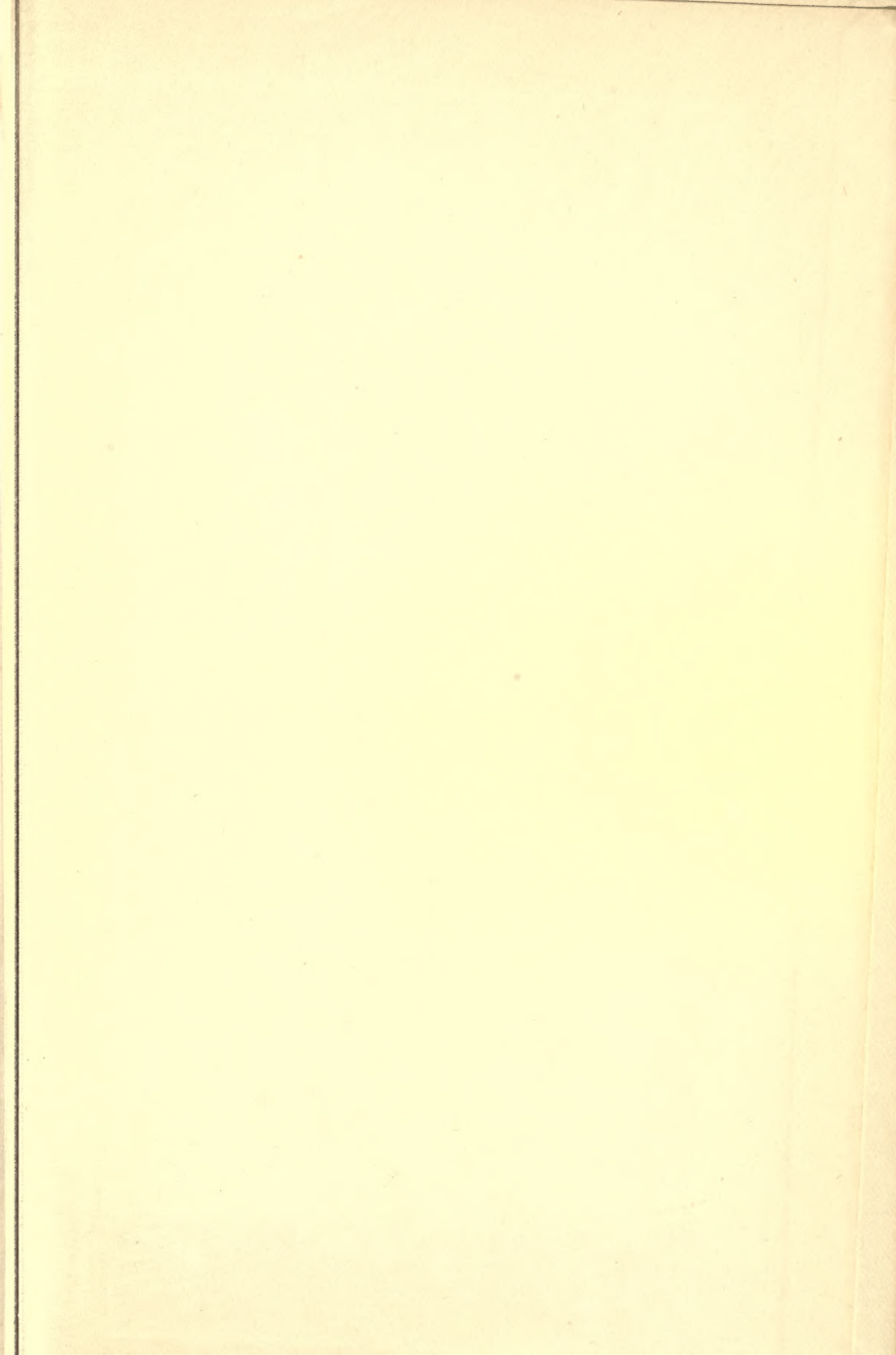
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with sufficient severity, and the saint replied : “ What was I to do ? I did my best to rouse myself to a state of indignation that should be free from sin, but I confess that I am afraid of losing in a quarter of an hour the small amount of gentleness that I have been trying for the last twenty-two years to acquire. . . . A bee spends several months in making the honey that a man swallows at one mouthful ; and, besides, what is the good of preaching to a man who will not listen ? ”

It may be thought that we have said too much about St Francis of Sales ; but in order to develop the full and true meaning of the second Beatitude, there seemed no better method available than, as it were, to hear it speak and study its life, as it was realised in the person of the great saint who was its living embodiment.









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